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THE DEUCE AND ALL

BY

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HISTORY OF A SOUL," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ESSENCE OF SHORT STORY

THE UNIVERSITY OF
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INTRODUCTION

THE ESSENCE OF SHORT STORY

THERE is but one way to regain youth, and it has been known of all antiquity. Fresh life has to be infused into the aged body. The old man must needs fill his veins with a warm stream of blood—the blood of youth. Sorcerers and Magicians, the holy and the damned—all have been seeking Life's Elixir. It was so simple, so easy, and so utterly dangerous!

There is no such danger in attempting to rejuvenate human ideas. Their value is incommensurably higher than the worth of individual human life—and in accordance with an almost universal way of thinking, they are cheap on the market. My purpose is to submit one to a certain class of readers—THE intelligent one, as every author worth his salt is wont to believe of the class for whose intellect or sentimentality he caters. The proposal I submit is that Short Story being aged and white-haired, beggarly dressed, *cousue de fil blanc* as the French have it, it behoves the most sensible public, that is the English reading public, to rejuvenate Short Story.

How?

By the seeking of new and strange plots?

No; not necessarily.

By infusion of young blood?

Not blood, but ideas; the conception of new essential elements.

Which?

Music! Symphony! . . . I will explain.

The great Art, the most direct Arrow which forces open the hearts of men, the surest, the most quickly forthcoming and acting consolation of the afflicted, the highest sentimental power, the physical and intellectual Pleasure which appeals to the largest number of people—what is it? What is it that appeals to all human prisoners of this world? that compels, or, at least, helps with no little support, most of the animal races to perform the task which man gives them—such as the turning round in a circus for horses, or some tame exercise for wild lions and tigers?

Music.

Does an actress, does an orator possess a stronger grip upon the public: their voice is musical. It is by reason of the harmony in his verses that a poet lives. What of a prose writer? The charm and limpidness or the rolling thunder of his style are the ultimate test. If his pages run smooth like a rivulet among low bending trees, much will be forgiven him. If a different harmony springs from his lines, if he seeks the higher tone of personal symphony, if he can pour upon you the mighty streams of striking accords and they tickle pleasantly your ear, that man's fortune is made, and his name will be added to the list of those who never die out of memory. There is no more prose than poetry

where harmony does not appear, either wild or gentle, sweet or mighty.

But I suggest that Music can also be differently introduced in the one sort of prose writing which is capable of perfection, Short Story; that is, not merely introduced in the style and the treatment. The whole construction of a short story must be permeated with the essence of Music. To make it clear at once: A short story ought to be treated as a symphony. Let us take an example.

Very few people have not heard the Overture of "Egmont." If not the finest, it is at all events the most popular piece of the incidental music which Beethoven composed for Goethe's play. It is freely played at Concerts, I suppose because of the thrilling beauty of its climax.

The opening theme is made up of weighty chords, and the same rhythm reappears throughout. A short story must likewise start with a powerful Introduction, not of an independent nature, but strongly and strictly connected with the plot. You may plunge into the heart of your story, leaving to subsequent incidental sentences the care of giving light to your intentions.

You may, also, start at the beginning. In both cases your opening orchestration must at irregular—or even regular—intervals call back to the mind a familiar rhythm. It is the frame of your work, upon which you may build.

With the working of the incidents, the story, likewise the symphony, must become more vivid, more direct, more agitated, leading to an allegro. A short

Coda follows, and this must be worked so as to lead naturally, without any apparent trick, into the development section, which must be the clearest part of your work, the plainest, the most free from any adornment. Your original theme finds after this a ready opening, as a sort of recapitulation, in order that the subject be strongly grasped.

The Overture of "Egmont" has a final Coda based on independent material. According to one's tastes, the Coda in a short story can be thunderous, or as gentle as a caressing breeze on the hills. It is the element which you bring out in order to solve the mystery, to settle the accounts, punish the villain, marry the heroine, or, in any possible way, give an end to the tale which you are narrating.

Every part must be rhythmical. Use the strings or show marked favour to bassoons, or wood wind, or the majestic alliance of the big drum and the trombones, it all must be rhythmical. In fact, it is the only restriction placed upon your fanciful inspiration. Your story may seem jumpy and purposeless, let the end come, and, if it is satisfactory, and your work musical, you shall be justified!

Your reader will in all certainty recognize, as they pass, the voice of the 'cello, the clarinet, the diversion on the strings, the solemn brass, and the gentle horns. Let loose at intervals, if you care, a new incident; not as a thief in the night, but mightily, suddenly, with accompaniment of drums and cymbals.

With regard to the climax, let it be strong, eloquent, and victoriously convincing.

As the field of Music is large enough to contain men like Beethoven and Schumann as well as Tchaikovsky and Brahms, with Wagner near the stile, and Leoncavallo and the like sitting on the fence, daringly pretending to be in it—also, in short story writing, is there room for every point of view, for every different expression of art.

Because of its disorder which is still orderly and conscious, because of its wild agitation which remains correct, I have taken the Overture of "Egmont" as an example. But any piece of real music might be taken. Disorder is more to my liking—let others choose the stiffness and the orderly way of lesser men. But if their prose work is not musical, if their short story has not been orchestrated—unconsciously perhaps, there is no hope for them of winning a name.

There is more in an idea than a man can develop, but this Introduction will be sufficient to convey a meaning. A long Essay might bring forth an enumeration of names of Men not small in the world of literature, and who—so I think—are great only because the charms of Music were united in their works to the beauty of a refined style and lofty ideas. But who reads a long Essay?

How near I come to success in the following attempts remains to be seen. An ideal is an ideal. Realization is another thing. Quite.

But, ere you judge, I have more to say. The unextatic being has no business to write at all. And ecstasy is no mere accident of birth; it can be brought about by training, developed by hard work, secured for ever

by sheer mental force. Whatever good there is in the following tales, dealing as they do with all sorts and conditions of humanity, not even disdaining a more or less successful parody of our modern detective serial—that goodness is due to the holy effects of ecstasy.

Ecstasy! Rapture enthusiastic that arrests the whole mind! that causes the soul to stand, so to speak, without the fortress of the body! that brings forth an illuminating vision of that which is superhuman, eternal, essentially One with the great Schemer and the Great Schemes of all Times, all that is Pure and Beautiful in my work is Thine! The rest is but a wretched example of how Memory can fail to record.

But, mind you, there is more depth in these stories than meets the eye of the uninitiated. Like Nietzsche,¹ the clearest exponent of our doctrines who was not himself an adept, I can bide my time. I write neither for fame nor for profit. My work is merely an accident, and I claim no right because of its merits, which are great. I work for but one reward, and I alone can grant it to myself.

G. R.

LONDON, 1908-1910.

¹ Students of Magic and apostles of Ecstasy ought to read him more. Nietzsche is not all in Zarathoustra. Witness the admirable words on "Ecstasy" and "Art" in the "Twilight of the Idols."

DRONES

PART I THE SPRING

I INSCRIBE "Drones" to him without whose suggestion and help this tale—as well as several others in this collection—would never have been written.

DRONES

CHAPTER I

THE MOTHER

OLD Mr. Wood was in a state of frenzy. He found it beyond his power to control himself, and he would not go and ruminate over the event alone in the silence of his smoking-room. He thought every Liberal either a fool or a knave; he would have seen with delight all the Radicals of England sent on board a rotten old ship and the lot drowned in much the same way that Carrier carried his "noyades" at Nantes during the French terror. But to Socialism and Socialists he had not as yet given a thought. He knew that they were robbers—everybody is aware of that—but he had not thought that they might succeed in getting hold of the country and making their robbery lawful; and even less that they should dare come in the distant county where he enjoyed the evening of his life, amidst a quiet, peaceful, unintellectual, and unspoilt population, much of it consisting of his own tenants.

Yet it had come to pass that a Socialist demagogue, a son of Erin, had arrived in the place, and the red painted caravan in a field close by his lofty country house was a striking insult to Mr. Wood.

Tall, broad, with a whitish beard, eyes now somewhat dull and the skin puffy under them, he was still a man, and a good man too, within limitations. He loved his country, his family, and his Church—as modern Christians do. He was respected everywhere, but the love of the people around him went to dear, sweet Mrs. Wood, and the confidence of all was for James Wood, his brother, who owned a big factory in the district.

Christopher Wood, the landowner, was in a state of frenzy. He was using very strong language in the Park.

Meanwhile there was a very sweet scene in the drawing-room. The spring morning was lovely. With the big windows opening on to the lawn, with the flowers and plants sweetening and refreshing the air, with the high fireplace where sturdy logs of oak placidly awaited the liberating fire—when it would be cold again—with the bright furniture carefully selected by more than one generation, the room answered to the call of Spring.

Kathleen Wood sat at her mother's feet, knitting a little garment. She worked a few minutes in silence, smiling happily to herself; suddenly lifting her head to her mother, she held the baby's coat and exclaimed:

"Here it is, mother. I have just finished!"

"How lovely," said Mrs. Wood, and she passed a soft hand over her daughter's forehead.

"Let's see if the sleeves I made are as long as yours. . . . Yes, that's it. Well, mumsy, I think I have done enough for to-day. We've done six pieces

of that trousseau for Alice's little baby, haven't we? And it's for June only."

"Yes, dear." And the mother smiled. Kathleen left her seat, and walking to the French window opened it wide, and, with lips parted, kissed the soft, warm morning air. She took a deep breath of it and turned to her mother.

"Mother . . ."

"Yes, dear."

"It is nearly time Miss Vernon was here. I wonder where Victor can be. His friend will be at the station in a few minutes. Have you seen him this morning?"

"I haven't, but he was in the park early. He is sure to come in before going to meet his friend."

"I am longing to know her, mother. She must be a wonderful girl . . . going about . . . all alone . . . like a man. . . ."

"Would you like to, Kathleen?"

The girl looked at her mother and perceived the anxiety in the dear voice. She expressed her second thought, hiding the first.

"I wouldn't leave you, mother."

"Kathleen," Mrs. Wood said, "I am glad to have Miss Vernon come here, because she is your brother's friend. She is an orphan, a stranger in this land, and your father and I thought it would do her good to stay here for a few days before she goes to Paris. But you know all about her, don't you? Didn't Victor tell you?"

This last question she asked when she saw her daughter shaking her head.

"No," said Kathleen, "he never tells me anything

now, since he is back from Cambridge. That's why I am so anxious to see Miss Vernon," she added with her straight logic.

"He does not think as we do, dear," answered her mother, and she sighed. She very much wanted her boy to see things as she saw them.

"But, after all, I am not worse off than Mr. Sullivan," said Kathleen, who could not retain a sad feeling on such a spring morning. "Victor seems to shun him also. Do you know what I think, mother?"

"What, dear?"

"Well, I think that Uncle James was right yesterday . . ."

"Your uncle is always right, dear," said Mrs. Wood, with a silent glance at her own husband's portrait on the right of the mantelpiece. "But what did he say?"

"That Victor was in love!"

"I trust not, dear. And now will you go and try to find your brother? See if he is not in his favourite corner with Mr. Sullivan. I do hope they are together, or else your father will meet Mr. Sullivan and he will excite himself over politics."

"I should be sorry for Mr. Sullivan," said Kathleen. It was a well-known fact that the sculptor and Mr. Wood had few beliefs in common.

Victor was not far away. His moodish impulses often drove him towards the fields and the hills, where he could be alone with his wandering thoughts; but he had, so far, always returned home after some hours. At the moment his sister was going in search of him he came in sight, and hailed her gaily.

"Hullo, Kate!"

"Good morning, old boy. Where have you been?"

"I don't know." And with that typically precise answer, he walked into the room and passed behind his mother's armchair.

"Good morning, mother," he said simply, and rested his elbows on the back of her chair. As she did not speak, he began, with evident pleasure, to recall the feelings that had passed over him during his walk.

"The country was so temptingly attractive; I simply could not stay in. It is the first fine, pure day of sunshine we have had for a long time. . . . I walked in the grass. At Peter's farm I had a glass of milk. One of his sheep has a little lamb."

"I'd love to see it," exclaimed Kathleen. Her brother smiled indulgently and went on:

"All the bushes are getting their lovely spring leaves, the earth smells so sweet and fresh, the birds sing and build nests, flying about with stolen straw and down. It is glorious! Spring has come, Kathleen! Spring, mother!"

And moved by his memories he murmured in French:

"La fleur de l'égantier sent ses bourgeons éclore;
Le printemps naît ce soir; les vents vont s'embrasser;
Et la bergeronnette en attendant l'aurore
Aux premiers buissons verts commence à se poser."

But his sister was vexed not to have been called for the wonderful walk in the spring grass.

"Why didn't you ask me, Victor?" she said, re-

proachfully. "I shall go by myself now. You never want me since you have come down from Cambridge; I think you are getting horrid."

"I'd like to go out again and with you, this time," said Victor. "But I've got to meet Hedda, and I'd like to know beforehand what Sullivan is doing."

"I thought you had forgotten him! Well, go; you might see me at the station."

"Righto!"

Kathleen went out, and Mrs. Wood was suddenly awakened from her silent thoughts. Seeing her son ready to go into the park, she called him gently.

"Victor."

"Yes."

"Mind the spring, dear!"

"What do you mean, mother?"

"Don't fall in love, Victor."

"With whom? Hedda? Poor mother, there you are, already in a state of fear. It's all right, dear. . . . And, after all, what if I did? There is no harm that I know. Isn't love as natural to men of my age as spring itself? That good old spring, coming to shake off all the dust of autumn and winter."

"Victor, I do wish you would take life more seriously." And she rose and walked to him and put her hands on his shoulders, looking into his eyes. He divined her thought, and felt a tender emotion overcoming him.

"Victor," the mother went on, "you don't love her, do you? You are not going to love her; not going to make love to her, make her believe? Promise me, dear boy."

"What's the use? I cannot promise. Liberty I want, like all in Nature, birds and insects and flowers. I can't help loving the beautiful. And if one loves, why hide it? Is it not impossible?"

"It is selfish to show it."

"Selfish! How? How could I be selfish in showing love, if I feel it? Surely, mother, you cannot mean that love is a sentiment to be hidden."

"It is—at least before the time of the engagement."

"Engagement! How fast you go, mother."

"No, dear, I don't. There can be no happy love outside the straight path, which leads from engagement to marriage."

"Marriage now! What of the margin? There is room outside marriage for love, I am sure . . . for a disinterested and simple tenderness, for instance, for the simple joy of living, in beauty, in youth, in some friendly bond which helps to reach common ideals."

"There, you are dreaming again, my boy. You must control yourself, or else you will be liable to gain more affection than it would be possible and allowable for you to return. Accept no more than you can give. A woman's love is simple, straight, all one way; it implicates and necessitates a very simple love in exchange. You would not fade the 'joy of life,' as you say, for others."

The mother was pleading in earnest. She had no desire to see her son married, let alone married to an artist, a foreigner, a girl who was used to travel and work alone, who was going to take up sculpture in Paris, who was penniless and without any relations.

But Victor loved to discuss such questions in a general, impersonal way. He could not easily be stopped when he once began to juggle with words. He felt like teaching a little of his own theories to his mother, theories learned from books and platonic intercourse with girl friends at Cambridge.

"Do you think, mother, that for a woman who is possessed of some sense, spiritual love, the mutual attraction of souls necessarily awakens the idea of marriage?"

"A woman loves but in one manner, my boy, whatever sense she might have."

"Well! what a difference then between them and us! That is not the way Shakespeare and Goethe, Shelley and Walt Whitman looked at life and love; no, nor your favourite French author Chateaubriand either. To them, love appeared as a part of Soul's domain. The greater the soul, the stronger and broader and wider the power of loving."

"Victor, you have not yet been in love! You should not express such ideas. You will one day find out that love is simple."

"Never! unless I become a fool and blind!"

"Love is blind, dear!"

The young man laughed outright.

"If Sullivan were here, mother, I know exactly what he would say. He would look gravely at the designs on the carpet and quietly quote: 'Not after the honeymoon, Madam.' But I am not an expert at his favourite ways of jesting. I know my limitations. What I also know is that I am clever and intelligent

enough to be able to do without previous experience. Books and the study of the past—nay, of my own nature, have taught me more than you know on the subject of love.”

Mrs. Wood ignored the defiant challenge. She loved her children and their words could not possibly hurt her. She looked at her son and answered quietly:

“It is only character that matters, Victor, not cleverness. Be good and be just. Theory, as all things of the intellectual domain, is not so important as practical actions and results.”

“Oh, but, mother, you forget that there are different criteria. All men are not to be judged by the same standard. There are men and women of one kind, men and women of another kind, men and women of many kinds. Some work for themselves, some for others, some for their family, some for duty’s sake, some for money. You may judge a business man or a soldier or a bourgeois by his life, by his actions; there is another criterion to be applied to the artist. The former work for the present and in the present; the latter for the future and in the future.”

“The world can do without any artist that does not live a good and just life. It would be better without him. We must be good and just and true. We have no right to amuse ourselves at the expense of any one else—and you know that is the real idea of what you call the artistic life. These men play with the hearts and souls of women, as if they were puppets.”

“Yes, mother, that may be, but they learn life, they transcribe it into some beautiful work of art, that lives

for ever and ever, teaching life to others, who have not the self-courage required to handle the souls of women."

"We will not argue any longer, my dear boy. It does you no good. Let me only beg of you not to start in life bent upon such ideas as those you are expressing. I hope God will not let my boy become one of those so-called artists. You are much too young to marry, and Miss Vernon is not the right woman for you to marry. I hope, in consequence, that you are not going to fall in love with her, nor make love to her."

Victor Wood stared at his mother in blank amazement. He thought her stubborn, out of touch with the feelings of his own spirit. He felt as sorry for her as she did for him. Her point of view was so entirely different from his own that he felt helpless but utterly unconvinced. She was still speaking.

"We have not invited her here for you to fall in love with or gain some such experience as you might. We trust you both to be responsible human beings. Your father and I have asked her because she was your friend—and an orphan. But you cannot think of marrying her. I hope she will have a pleasant time and a happy memory of her stay with us. But our world is not her world, and we have tried to make of you another man than the man you consider to be your ideal of an artist. Do not be selfish, my boy. Think of us, think of the future of every one. Think always of the near and the distant future of any girl you happen to meet."

And she embraced her son and kissed him, with tears in her eyes. As almost every mother who loves her sons, who has not allowed any one to come between them and herself, at any time of their life, who has fed them and nursed them, and played with them, Mrs. Wood understood her boy and she felt nervous for him, almost terrified by the dread which she could not dismiss from her thoughts, of the tragedies that might be caused by him, and in which he would finally play a leading and, alas, most unhappy part.

Victor felt differently. He had been urged from childhood to analyze himself, to decide for himself, to rely upon himself. His father believed in self-reliance, his uncle did, every one about him did. And, at the present juncture, he would decide and act alone. Hedda was no silly child, brought up between four walls, with old-fashioned, set prejudices; she was used to the world, she was an artist, and if the woman was latent in her, he could not know it. Indeed, he knew not what the woman was. He thought life beautiful, Nature young and high spirited, and that he and any one else, who was blessed—unaware of the curse it is—with an artistic temperament, meant to lead a full life of happy experiences, at the expense of humanity at large, of other hearts in particular. He thought thus because he believed that the life of an artist brings light and knowledge to others, and cannot in consequence abide by the common law, destined as it is to profit the world.

He put on his hat, and, feeling pleased with himself, because he knew better than his own parent,

kissed his mother and walked to the door. She called him back.

"Are you going to the station, Victor?"

"Yes, now, though I may be late. Kath is sure to have been there. I'll meet them on the way."

Mrs. Wood was left alone. She sighed and threw a loving glance to the place where her son had been, and busied herself with putting her work-basket in order.

CHAPTER II

THE FATHER AND THE SELFISH FRIEND

SHE had little time left for fearful dread. Her brother-in-law came in from the park with Bernard Sullivan, both laughing good-humouredly. The wrath of old Mr. Wood was the cause of their merriment. She listened to them an instant with interest, anxious to hear their opinion on the new cause and learn the excuse her husband had to indulge in one of his fits of temper—too frequent of late for the good of his health and for the peace of mind of his family.

"He'll never change," Sullivan was saying.

James Wood shrugged his shoulders and smiled reassuringly to his sister-in-law.

"He is right, nevertheless, old man. His ideas are quite sound, you know."

"Yes, and that is not the least of my sources of fun. He ought to have been an anarchist; he's got the revolutionary spirit, and the temper."

"You delight in rousing him, don't you?"

"Rather. Il est impayable! I'd like to let him loose in the Westminster talking shops."

"It might quieten him. I have paid to learn that."

"Oh, you! . . . but for him I doubt it."

Mrs. Wood did not like to hear her husband discussed, even by his brother and his friend, and, reassured by their calmness, she left the room silently. Hardly had she gone when the master of the house entered, red and panting.

"I am not going to let you out so easily, James," he said, "I never saw such a fool as you are. Damme! you have served these men for ten years, giving much time and money to them in exchange for little work; they have in you a most stupidly devoted representative in the Commons and they dare choose one of those blackguards of Socialists to oppose you at the next election—and you stand unmoved, cool and smiling!"

"I shall be glad to rest, Christopher."

"The benefactor will beat the babbler," Sullivan said quietly.

"That is not the question. It's the principle which is in danger! They have come here! They mean to stay! They poison the country! and James will have to lower himself to a discussion with them, to fight with careful clear arguments one of those men without beliefs, without morals, without respect for their country. . . ."

"And without prejudice," said Sullivan.

Mr. Wood ignored the sarcasm.

"And what a man! not a workman, not a poor man, but a schoolmaster with an undigested amount of book-learning."

"I sha'n't lower myself, Christopher. If they want him, they are welcome."

"That candidate is a gentleman, Mr. Wood," said Sullivan.

For an instant Mr. Wood remained speechless in the face of such a preposterous pretension; and his brother took advantage of the interval.

"We all have a right to our opinions," he said philosophically.

Mr. Wood found his voice again. "That's all talk, James, wasted talk. I hope you will see that your working men understand the matter and realize that they will have to vote for you or find work elsewhere."

"Certainly not! Why, it's quite illegal and you yourself would not do it. They are free Britons; if they are willing to risk the future of their country into the hands of Socialists, by all means let them do so. . . ."

"Well, you'll see if I don't," said Mr. Wood, and he threw at the two men a defying glance. Sullivan spoke very gently.

"I should not interfere, if I were you," he said.

"I'll do what it pleases me to do, and I don't interfere with you, anyhow."

The sculptor commenced to whistle "Yankee Doodle" and walked to the other end of the room. Then he turned back, hearing the renewed attack.

"They have no sense, they are fools, ready to believe in the first blackguard who promises to hand them the moon."

"Which proves that every human being is longing to get it," answered James. "And if they believe, it is because they hope to improve their material existence."

"They live only for material pleasures!" grunted his brother.

"The certainty of material enjoyment is a very acceptable compensation for the loss of ideals," admitted Sullivan.

James Wood smiled and turned to his friend.

"I thought you were an idealist," he said.

"If I had no bread, my idealism would be of little value."

"I thought you wanted Art for all?"

"All must first have beer."

"I have no patience with you," said Christopher Wood. "And if my brother fails in his duty, I shall do mine . . . right up to the end, for my conscience' sake and for the future of my children."

Sullivan laughed. "I should let them see to that. Methinks Victor has no need for any one to build an ideal for him."

"Maybe. But he wants his material future insured; you said it yourself. I hope he won't sneer at everything, as you do. . . . By the way, do you know that friend of his, Miss Vernon?"

"A little. . . . That is, I met her once. She came to me for advice."

"Does she paint?" James Wood inquired.

"She is a sculptor and fairly clever for a woman. She only needs the holy spark."

"How do you understand it?"

"Ask her. Here she is, I believe."

At that moment they heard Kathleen outside, speaking with animation to another girl, whose pleasant rich voice answered her.

CHAPTER III

THE OTHER AND UNSELFISH FRIEND

THE next instant Victor entered the room, and was soon followed by Miss Vernon and his sister Kathleen. The young girl looked straight at the men while shaking hands, and smiled sweetly at Sullivan.

Hedda Vernon was one of the many women whose attractive personality is seldom divined by men, but must needs establish itself in the course of familiar conversation. When one knew her one could not but admire her, and the discovery that she was beautiful followed. She was beautiful in spite of her thoughtful brow, her almost colourless hair, and her inartistic clothing. She had a *certain je ne sais quoi* which made her appear beautiful, and each of her new friends was left surprised at the discovery.

Victor was in the happiest of moods, and his sister showed by her attitude and admiring glances that she was quite set upon loving her brother's friend.

They were all conversing when a footman brought in a telegram to Mr. Wood.

"My old friend from France cannot come," said the master of the house, after perusing it; "his wife is ill."

"I am sorry," Sullivan said. "I like old Colonel Sancroix. He is a character."

Mrs. Wood was disappointed. She knew that the presence of the French officer had a soothing influence on her husband, and that no one could but be relieved by his arrival. But since Colonel Sancroix had married, late in life, a young and somewhat frivolous Parisienne, he could not find in himself the courage to leave her much alone in Paris, where he commanded a regiment of light cavalry. But the telegram was already put aside by her husband, who suddenly remembered that he had set his mind upon his brother being elected in spite of himself.

"Victor," he said to his son, "your uncle needs your help."

"Do you, uncle?" said the boy, quite happy, for he liked his father's brother.

Kathleen had passed her hand through Hedda's arm and was leading her to the piano. Mrs. Wood went out to give orders, and Sullivan was standing apart, studying the young Norwegian girl.

James Wood answered, as lightly as he could, but not without a note of apprehension:

"It's an idea of your father, my boy. He wants you to canvass for me."

The sculptor turned his eyes towards Victor and chuckled. The boy spoke gravely.

"Oh!" he said. "Is that it? But of what use can I be to you?"

A little too dictatorial came his father's answer.

"You will go to the electors. They have known

you ever since you were born, and they show you some affection. You can tell them to vote for your uncle, who is an honest man."

"I am sorry, pater. I can't do it. I do not share the political opinions of my uncle. In fact, they are quite opposed to mine. I'd rather be neutral."

"What?"

"Uncle James would be the first to resent my helping him against the voice of my conscience."

"What do you know about your conscience?" inquired Sullivan.

"Bernard, I wish you'd stop your sneering," the boy said angrily. "This is a serious matter."

From the piano came the air of "Ase's Death." Hedda was playing the music of "Peer Gynt."

Mr. Wood did not attempt to control himself.

"You will do as you are told, Victor," he said.

"Leave him alone, Christopher," his brother pleaded.

"He shall do as he is told!"

"Father, please! It is impossible."

"Is it? For three generations the family has held this seat, always on the same side; the tradition must be maintained, and the old political creed represented by one of us."

Sullivan came to the rescue.

"Is it not time for some new ideas to be introduced into the old creed?" he said innocently. "Three generations are more than sufficient to dry up any idea."

"This is no jest!" said the father. "I have spoken, and Victor shall obey!"

"I can't." The boy was almost imploring.

"You must! or else . . ."

"Or else?" Victor straightened himself.

There came a suspense over the people in the room. Sullivan had ceased to smile. Hedda was standing by the piano, intently listening. Kathleen had gone to her brother's side.

"Or else you'll leave this house!"

Mr. Wood was very red, and, in his fit of temper, looked far from prepossessing.

His brother tried in vain to prevent the boy from answering. Victor looked steadily at his father, and, strengthened by the presence of Hedda, he spoke in ringing accents:

"I shall go, then!"

Mr. Wood felt suddenly very sorry for his outburst; but hated to go back, and, walking to the door, he said sulkily:

"Very well. I give you two days to reconsider that answer," and he walked out.

His daughter made a movement as if to follow him, then turned to her new friend, and, seeing that Hedda was now gazing absently through the window, she took her brother's hand.

"Oh! Victor, how can you?" she said, and her uncle expressed a similar thought.

"Why did you not wait? We could have discussed that together, you and I."

The boy felt the truth of this reproach. But he would not be beaten, nor thought badly of, and his hereditary obstinacy caused him to retort:

"I can't help it, uncle. I want truth and freedom and light in me and around me. . . . Especially in the spring," he added with great feeling.

One single word did Sullivan say:

"Dreamer!"

And he left the room seeking Mrs. Wood, in order to make her acquainted, before her husband could do so, with the discussion and the ultimatum. She might possibly arrange matters.

James Wood went out to try and soothe his brother's anger. His niece felt vaguely that she was now *de trop* between Hedda and Victor, and after wandering aimlessly from the piano to the French window, went abruptly into the park.

But Hedda had not noticed anything. She had heard the words of her friend, his final answer to his father, and then a veil had been spread over her senses and she heard nothing, she saw nothing, but, in the distance, some blackbirds enjoying the spring.

Victor's blood was rushing hot through his veins, and was beating an excited march against his temples; his reflections in consequence were far from coherent. The discussion he had had with his mother came back to his memory, and he cherished the same feeling for both his parents. He was well rid of them if they were going to preach to him and order him about in such a manner. And he had only been back a few weeks from Cambridge. He would go! He would go!

And he suddenly thought of Hedda. She had heard it all. She, at least, was a friend from whom he could expect support. His mother had warned him against

falling in love with her. Why! he did love her. And she loved him. He was sure of it.

He called her name.

"Hedda!"

She heard him not, and he came nearer, touched her shoulder, repeating "Hedda! Hedda, dear!"

The girl started. She was very far away. Turning to her friend she read anxiety on his face, and sorrow, and she left dreamland with a feeling of self-reproach for having forgotten the laws of friendship. She would have done as he had; yet she felt sorry that it had all happened.

"Yes, dear," she said sororially.

"Hedda! my friend! I am so sorry that you had to see my father for the first time when he was in one of his worst moods. . . ."

"Never mind, dear! . . . It does not matter."

But the boy knew that she felt hurt for him.

"Hedda! Don't be sad, dear. I wish you'd forget it!"

"I will, Victor, if you do. . . ."

She knew that he wished to speak, to let out his heart.

"Every time I see my father get in such a rage I feel I ought to leave the house. It can do him no good to see me here, unable to share his ideas, longing to express mine with as much energy as he does his own. But I can't do it. I should be in the wrong. He loves mother and Kate, and me too, in a way. He looks after us, he has earned a right to personal opinions; I haven't."

He was now pacing the room and the girl tightened her lips, unwilling to stop him.

"What's the use of all my dreams if they lead me nowhere? When I was a child I had the same beliefs as my mother; I was unselfish, ready to sacrifice my own personality for the sake of some ideal, of some strange spiritualism. I believed in angels—I only believe in spirits now. Tears of joy and of religious emotion came to my eyes when I heard my voice blended with other voices in the church. . . ."

"Yes, I know the feeling," the girl murmured.

"When I grew older, and read the books I still love, dreams more tangible took hold of me; the dream of Shelley: the longing for the pure love of a woman who would absorb all my being, realize me fully. There was then no selfishness in that conception, merely a wish to work together for some lofty aim, for the good of humanity, for the welfare of my fellow beings. It seems far away, now! Perhaps they were but chimeras, visions, dreams, as my cynical friend says. Yet, dear, the spring is no dream! . . ."

The girl felt a lump in her throat.

"No, Victor," she said, "Spring is no dream."

The boy looked straight in her eyes.

"Hedda! Hedda! HEDDA!" he panted.

Her eyes were fixed on his, but they were cloudy, like limpid air suddenly become misty. He seized her hand.

"Do you understand me, Hedda? Do you love me? Do you realize what is in me, what I could give to the woman who should feel strong enough to keep it? Who will she be? Who was she who passed in my dreams? Hedda! Was it you, dear? Will you give a shape to my sterile hopes and desires?"

She stood before him, stiffened, her breast rising heavily. He came nearer . . . nearer still, placed his two hands on her shoulders and she bent like a pliant branch. Her head fell on him, and, embracing her tightly, passionately, he drank life and love from her lips. . . .

She was to remember that kiss . . . later.

CHAPTER IV

THE PLEDGE IMPOSED

BERNARD SULLIVAN, having found Mrs. Wood, entered the drawing-room at this moment and witnessed the long embrace. They heard him not and he went out again, pale and troubled.

Hedda heard the shutting of the door, and almost at the same time the lunch bell. She withdrew herself and lifted her head.

"It is lunch time," he said.

"I must go to my room," she murmured, and left hurriedly.

He tried to retain her but she had gone already, and he walked to the window.

An insect was flying from flower to flower and he watched it awhile, and said aloud: "As the bee goes to the flower!"

Sullivan had seen the girl come out and had re-entered the room. He answered gravely the remark of his friend.

"This is no bee, Victor! but a drone, a selfish, gluttonous, instinctive drone. It gathers pollen but makes no honey . . ."

The boy turned suddenly and confronted him.

"What do you mean?" he cried angrily.

"More love stories, Victor?"

"Have you turned eavesdropper?"

"Idiot! I came in a minute ago and saw you making love to Miss Vernon. You lose no time!"

"What's that to you?"

"Much!"

"You're jealous?"

"I hope you know me well enough to think better. I felt for the poor girl and I simply, but very deeply, pity her."

"What an angel of goodness you are, Sullivan! And may I know the cause of your compassion?"

"Because I know her and I know you. She deserves a better fate than the honour of yielding one more scalp for your belt. Aren't you spoiling enough lives already?"

"I spoil no lives. You don't understand pure friendship, and even if I did, again I ask you: what's that to you?"

"Not my business, evidently. Yet, my boy, I am a friend of yours, and I think I have proved it. Has not the time come for you to feel the responsibility of your actions and cease to act like a child?"

"How do you know whether I feel or not the responsibility of my actions? What if Hedda and I were engaged?"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" The sculptor sighed and went on: "I am sorry. I did not think you had gone so far, lost your head to such a terrible extent."

The son of Christopher Wood was roused.

"Lost my head! What do you mean?"

"Are you a poet, Victor, an artist? Do you want to give away your freedom? I thought you had loved enough to realize that you could not love for ever. It is a serious matter to make a girl love you; but it is slight in comparison with the terrible tragedies you are preparing when you act as if you thought yourself seriously in love. Engaged! indeed. You are no more the man to be engaged than . . . than I am. You are an artist,—you've got the temperament of one, at all events,—you are a drone; you can't help it. It's in you!"

"Yes, I am an artist. But Hedda is also one, and it makes all the difference."

"A woman is a woman, Victor. But I have nothing more to say. I seem to be too late already. Miss Vernon is engaged to you?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't know. . . . You see, it came all so suddenly!"

Sullivan breathed more freely.

"Thank the gods!" he murmured.

"But I love her as I never loved any woman," the boy went on. "She is the girl in a million . . ."

"Agreed."

"And if there is a mate for me under the heavens, Hedda is that girl."

"How do you know? Have you kissed them all?"

"Sullivan, you are a damned rascal. And I wish you'd have done with your cynical nonsense. What Miss Vernon thinks and does is no business of yours."

"Quite so. But I am your friend and, allow me to

say so, I wish her well too. I wish you could see life with my experience: there are but two ends to this romance of yours. You will marry . . . or not. In both instances I pity her and you. I pity her most if she does not become your wife; if she does, it might be worse . . . for you. A man like you can make no good husband. You are an artist."

"And you think that an artist cannot marry and be happy?"

"Precisely."

"That the only alternative for me is to seduce women and leave them afterwards?"

The subject was growing delicate and to the sculptor it seemed better to regain the offensive.

"You have done so!" he said quietly. "You have seduced Hedda Vernon."

Victor Wood was paralysed with fury. He looked very much like his father, as he swore a mighty oath. The Irishman took advantage of the silence in which Victor had sunk back.

"I don't mean what you think," he said, in the manner of his countrymen. "You are much too mystical for that! It seems far more pleasant to you to rouse the desires of a woman and, when it is too late for her to be ever happy afterwards, play the Knight Errant. You believe in Nature and her claims until they demand satisfaction, and then, Pilate-wise, you withdraw . . . and wash your hands."

He had struck home this time, and his young friend was moved.

"What are you driving at?" he inquired pitifully.

"Listen, Victor. Hedda, your friend, is a good girl, clever and brave . . . "

"Yes!"

"She is one of the few women who seem to be made for work, who are able to accomplish some personal task, for Art or Humanity. But in spite of it all, above all, she remains a woman, she is a woman; her instincts are feminine. They dominate all her faculties and they are bound to absorb them all if they are awakened before the time is due, before she has produced her work. Yes, decidedly, the mother would kill the artist."

"And what do you want me to do? What do you suggest? Look here, man, I may be a fool, a selfish fool. But I love her and she loves me."

"Both of you think you do!" Sullivan corrected.

"Well! it's the same thing. Besides, I deny any mistake on my part. What do you want? Do you love her yourself?"

"I want her to work! and find herself. She has a personality, but she must yet realize it. You must give her time."

"Go away from her?"

"Yes, Victor."

"To leave you in the place?"

"If it can help her, yes. You ought to know me better, not to pile up one more dubious quality against me. When Art is concerned, I banish all selfishness from my soul."

The two men fell silent. Presently the gong sounded in the hall, and brought them back to reality. It was the second call for lunch.

"Well?" Sullivan asked.

"I can't promise."

"You must!"

"After lunch, Sullivan."

As he spoke, Kathleen entered the room.

CHAPTER V

THE OTHER LOVER

SHE was laughing happily and summoned the men to the dining-room. She then looked behind the piano, expecting to find Hedda there.

"Where is Miss Vernon, Victor?" she said.

"In her room, I believe," her brother answered, and Sullivan, perfectly calm again, added:

"Do you like her?"

"Do I? Of course I do, I love her."

Sullivan mumbled:

"Tu quoque!"

But the girl understood, and all her gaiety disappeared in an instant. She looked at her brother, then at his friend—a little longer and a little more intently at him—and, unable to speak, went into the dining-room, where they followed her.

Crossing the hall, Victor Wood addressed Sullivan.

"What of yourself? Are you blind, man?"

The sculptor sighed, knowing that Victor was referring to Kathleen, his sister. His answer was not uttered, but within himself it was worded: "Alas! it is too late."

DRONES

PART II

THE YELLOW SEASON

CHAPTER VI

SULLIVAN'S SAPPHO

ANY clever and persevering man may come to understand the working of a woman's heart; it takes but a fool to realize the meaning of her unspoken thoughts. Victor Wood could have translated into fit language the intellectual ideas of Hedda Vernon, her thoughts even unexpressed; his lack of persistency prevented him from reading her heart. When the time had come for him to answer the ultimatum of his father, his uncle had obtained a delay, during which he was to travel alone and see the world. To the other ultimatum, he had answered by the promise for which Bernard Sullivan had begged him.

And Hedda had respected his silence for two days, unable to understand, but with a certain feeling of safety and not without relief. She loved him enough to give herself to him, and yet she felt vaguely that it were better to let time pass. After two days she left the house, going to Norway, whence she was to start for Paris after a week.

The same day, Victor Wood left for Scotland, and Sullivan, unable to keep himself away from Paris, returned to his studio and his work.

Paris was to him the only place in the world where he could preserve the youth of his spirit. By Paris, he meant the Latin Quarter. And not even the whole of it; merely a circumference of scarcely two miles' periphery around the café d'Harcourt. He could well afford to be out of it. Sullivan had already a wide market for his works, and apart from a few friends in the "Quartier," knew none of the younger men who dwell in the passages and impasses and *fonds de cour* therein. But he loved the atmosphere; he loved to watch the independent gatherings, the familiar and friendly life, yet often strictly ruled by conventions—some few conventions—and to feel everywhere the spirit of useful optimism freely breathing above all heads. His Paris was the Paris of the foreign artist (if an artist may anywhere be foreign). It is the whole world in *raccourci*. Love, hatred, drink, poison, despair, riches that last a night, poverty that hangs above one for twenty-nine days in the month, and is laughed at, the most tender and helpful friendships, the bitterest of jealousies, all the passions of the human heart, all the beauties of the human soul, all the vices of the human flesh—he found there. And they are all young, and live fast, and work hard; the student of humanity learns quicker and sees more in less time. In the long room of the "d'Harcourt," or at the "Dôme," Sullivan had seen the world pass. Snobs and rich foreigners in quest of experience, stranded Britishers longing for Fleet Street and Soho, successful or unsuccessful but real and sincere artists, and the disillusioned, awaiting the liberating cheque to help them to get home, as his

friend James Wood had done, years ago, and it had turned out well for him. This for the men. What of the women? The same hopes, the same expectations, doubled by the hardships imposed on their sex, or the repeated sacrifice of themselves, caused by the presence undetected in them of a spark of artistic fire—that cursed blessing.

Sullivan had been back for over five months and it was the yellow season. The leaves of meagre trees on the boulevards and in the gardens where many studios have been erected were yellow, as were the contents of many a glass in which absinthe is less diluted and accordingly more of a green shade during the hotter season. Sullivan drank no absinthe and cared little for the shade of leaves; he was working.

His statue of Sappho stood before him, a wild expression set now for ever on her marble face, the poetess inspired, the woman beautiful, whose soul had come to be wearied of the beauty of her body, of the passions ever satisfied and ever crying more loudly for satisfaction. "Sappho wearied of love," he had expressed her well. But he was an artist and his ideal danced behind the statue and above it, and the statue was not the ideal.

Yet they all liked it. He stood silent while they studied it, his friends, a few men and girls, and they understood and spoke naught to him until he had shaken himself out of the dream.

It was a countryman of his, a simple-souled young son of the land, who broke the silence. Sullivan had taken him to Paris ostensibly to make use of him as a

model—in reality to watch his thoughts in the strange capital.

“Begorra! Oi have not seen such a foine body in me loife. And, that’s a fact, her hear-rt bleeds, I obsarvé; it’s loike me poor disthressful countree.”

The idea of Sappho standing for the representation of a self-enslaved country was certainly comic to those present, but their respect for Sullivan prevented their gaiety from exploding. They walked round the studio, admiring and critizing works which they had seen many a time before. The light was good and they all felt happy in the success of their friend.

Presently the men withdrew and Sullivan was left alone with the two girls, Lucie and Marguerite. The latter sat at a little table and began writing, while Lucie walked to the sculptor and took his hands.

“Bernard, I am so glad,” she said.

“Yes, child, I know,” he answered. “But, yourself, how are you getting on? When will you be happy and work?”

His simple words seemed to affect her much and she broke into a pitiful cry.

“Oh! Bernard, it kills me; je n’en peux plus,” she murmured.

“You’re jealous?”

“I can’t bear it, dear. He does not love me!”

“Oh yes, he does.”

“But he loves her better. And I want him, oh! I want him.”

“My dear Lucie, I can only hope that you will cease loving him. You know him, don’t you?”

"Oh yes! He is tired of me, already. And I didn't know! I didn't know that there was another."

He saw how useless words would be to soothe the girl's pain, and he simply put his arm round her and brought her to a seat and kissed her. She cried in silence awhile, and when she got up and attempted to smile at him, he lighted a pipe and began, speaking his thought aloud.

"What a problem is Life! Why do we love differently, men and women? Is that boy mad or is he a more advanced type of humanity? And how is it that with him the new love does not blow away the past? Poor girl! poor girl!"

She cried again, silent tears.

"I wish I could do something," he murmured. But she heard him and said:

"Bernard, you can!"

"I! Do you think he would believe me, if I told him of your feelings?"

"Oh no; he would not, because I have lied to him all the while. I pretended in order to help him, to make him feel free and happy! But there is a way, dear."

"What?"

"You love her, Bernard, and you ask me such a question!"

"I . . . love . . . Hedda . . . !"

"Do you think a girl can't see that? And especially one who knows you so well?"

"One who has loved me, you mean, dear."

"Yes, I am not ashamed of saying it; I have loved

you and I will always be your friend. But Victor has my whole soul, now."

Sullivan's head was hidden amidst a thick cloud of smoke. Presently he emerged out of it and said in a low voice:

"Yes, Lucie, I love Hedda."

"Of course."

"You want me to take her out of your way, do you?"

The question was too straight to admit of a verbal answer, but she did not contradict him.

"She loves you, dear," Lucie said.

"She loves him, Lucie."

"She can't love you both at the same time."

"Why! You don't know the possibilities of your own sex, child."

She looked reproachful.

"You see, dear, I am under a promise. Victor and I decided, nearly six months ago, to let Hedda find herself and work awhile. The time will be soon over and he has respected his part of the contract, he has not seen her, though he has now been in Paris for a week, without counting the three weeks he spent here before going to Italy. That's where you met him."

She nodded.

"I have also kept my promise. I made her work and I tried to hide my love. You seem to have found it out."

Lucie did not answer him, but her own thoughts.

"He mustn't go to her, he mustn't"; she whispered.

And, at the same time, there came a knock at the door. Marguerite, who sat close by it, got up and

opened it. Neither Lucie nor Sullivan, standing at the other end of the large studio, had heard the call, and they turned suddenly, hearing voices. Marguerite came back and gathered her papers, then walked upstairs.

By the door stood Hedda Vernon, examining the Sappho.

Sullivan looked at his statue, then at his friend, and his thought was:

“When she has found herself, and lived . . . what a different Sappho she will make!”

CHAPTER VII

THE PASSING OF MARGUERITE

“DO you like it?”

Sullivan had not expected her, and he felt sorry for Lucie, who had apparently no wish to meet Hedda. He put the question in order to gain time and give Lucie a chance of joining Marguerite upstairs or of leaving the studio.

He had not reckoned with feminine nature. Lucie smiled, walked up to the Sappho, and, while chatting with Hedda, studied the girl. But Hedda had naught in her to be surprised by any scrutiny; her nature was very open.

“I like it because it is your work,” she answered simply. “I do not understand the feeling you want to express here.”

The sculptor felt very small, and his Sappho had no charm to him for a time. Hedda perceived the unusual seriousness of his attitude and turned to Lucie as if to ask her the cause of it. But Lucie gave no answer to the silent question, merely shook her head, and went out into the garden.

There was little furniture in the large studio but one chair, a high wooden stool, a small writing-table,

a deep settee, and a low divan. The empty space was taken by a large amount of the master's unfinished works and clay attempts, high and low, noble and otherwise. The stairs went from the centre-left up to the private apartment which Sullivan occupied, and a sliding panel allowed him to see from upstairs who entered the studio. Behind the wooden panel sat Marguerite. She was listening and trying hard to grasp her thoughts firmly.

"Why do you sigh, Bernard?" Hedda was demanding.

"Vague ennui," he said, "and disappointment. But I'm all right, you know."

She did not believe him, and in her eyes he saw that she felt sad of his sadness. He spoke in order to break a silence which was now too heavy. He had struggled for six months, and in spite of hard work it had weakened him and brought his spirits down.

"Won't you sit down and talk to me?"

"I shall come again, soon, but I must go and see Victor. I hear he is back in Paris, and I would like to see him."

"Has he not been to your studio?"

"He must have, but, of course, I was out all day yesterday."

Sullivan knew better, but he said nothing, and when she took his hand and pressed it he turned aside.

Alone in the studio, he covered his statue and sat down, undecided, thinking, while above him a woman's face watched him with sorrow. . . .

Presently Marguerite felt she could bear it no

longer, and she came down, creeping. She passed behind him unheard, and walked to the door, a little handbag in her hand. She opened the door and turned back.

"So long, dear," she said.

He started, and asked:

"Where are you going, Margot?"

"Home."

"Home! Why, what's the matter?"

"I want you to be happy, dear. Good-bye, good-bye!"

And proud of her sacrifice, she went out and walked away at a rapid pace, maddened, yet pleased with herself.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BURNING OF THE BOATS

SULLIVAN walked up and down the studio, repeating to himself the parting words of Marguerite. A good painter, she had known the sculptor for some months, and loved him from the first. The ethics of the Quartier differ from those of the rest of the world—or are they but the natural ethics of humanity unrestrained by and careless of the control of public opinion?—and she had waited patiently for her time to come. She thought it had come that morning, and her hurried departure gave Sullivan an insight into her heart. "Thank God, it was not too late," he murmured.

And he thought of Hedda, and as he allowed his love for her to speak aloud in the secrecy of his studio, a curious phenomenon took place. Every action of his life came back to his mind with a kaleidoscopic rapidity, as if he were at the moment of dying. He was passing his statues by, and each of them reminded him of even the smallest detail connected with it. As he stopped before the Sappho, unwilling to take off the veil spread over the statue, he heard a sound outside, and went to the door. There she was, coming to

him, and he forgot all in his joy. Unaware that since Marguerite had gone he had been left over an hour alone with his thoughts, Sullivan felt that the gods were kind to him, because of that woman returning after a short instant of thoughts concentrated upon him.

Indeed, she had been home, and had sat there, with her head in her hands, scrutinizing the future. But Marguerite had come and, taking her hand, had spoken to her, saying but a few words:

“Bernard wants you, dear; go to him if you love him, and make yourself and him happy.”

And without awaiting an answer, Marguerite had gone, taking her love within her soul, all the purer after the sacrifice.

How much we could gain, morally and intellectually, by either attempting to understand the motive which guides the people we call sinners, or, if the attempt is too far from our possibilities, to introduce in our judgement the charitable element which is part of the same Christian and moral codes of rules which forbid the sin. That some people are ready to push the leading principles of their lives up to extreme limits should be no cause of wonder to us; is not the new principle—more in accordance with modern ideas—that a man or a woman owes no account but to self, humanly defensible? Our souls and consciences are widening their horizons, and we know not with certainty who is more in accordance with the final aim of Nature: the so-called sinner or the self-restraining, broken to harness, respectable and commonplace man,

whose virtue is but cautiousness—cautiousness which does not act and profits nobody.

Whatever is our answer there can be no denying that men and women—more and more of them every day—refuse to accept any authority dictating rules to govern their actions. They would feel ashamed of themselves, and their conscience would speak loud against them if they did not live their lives, with its element of good and evil, regardless of the prejudices of the public. All great artists, all men who rose above humanity, had distinct ethics of their own, and to this fact we owe civilization and all our heritage of great deeds. They do not all deserve blame, these young men and women, whose great fault is but to overrate their possibilities, and who think themselves great artists. They may or they may not be that; no one but themselves or their associates will be called upon to pay the penalty of the overrating.

Hedda Vernon was an artist, and if she was human, as Bernard Sullivan himself, why should they judge her, they who have felt within their own heart the human beating which, if indulged in, would have caused them to act as she did?

Hedda was suffering; her heart spoke aloud, and she listened to its cry. Her eyes were swollen and dark-circled. She was gasping for breath, oppressed. It was in no hurry that she had decided to return to the studio. Had Marguerite not come she would nevertheless have acted in the same manner, though later perhaps. And as he, also much moved, looked in her eyes, he saw the approaching tragedy that was

to be enacted by her and himself, and others, under the severe control of Fate. Like the characters of the ancient Greek tragedies, he felt it coming and could do nothing but curse the Powers above. And he did not feel like cursing. He was brought before Cupid's altar by an unseen iron-gloved hand, and was afraid, yet not unhappy.

Even such a simple deed as their meeting and the consequences thereof they knew could not have taken place without words, more or less commonplace. They were as the doomed man coming out of a wreck who looks helplessly for a sail, a board, any floating object which he could grasp, on which he could rest before dying.

"Come in," he said.

"I saw you were sad, dear," she began.

"I was."

These were not the words she had prepared; she made a clumsy attempt.

"Were you working?"

"No, Hedda, I was not."

She sat down on the couch, and remained silent.

"Hedda!" he said.

"Yes, dear!"

"Hedda!"

"Bernard!"

Their eyes met. Each read the same thought and felt very weak. He mastered himself in an instant.

"Well?" he asked, intently looking at her.

"How long have you loved me?"

"Since the day I first saw you, I suppose."

"Before we met again . . . in England?"

"Yes." He spoke simply now, with little apparent emotion.

"Ah!" she said.

"Why? Are you sorry, dear? Does it trouble you?"

"It *has* troubled me, Bernard. I do not understand the ways of love. . . . It is haunting me. . . . It prevents me from thinking clearly. I had hoped to find a friend in you with whom I could discuss everything. . . . I have had no friend since I lost my brother! . . . And now, you love me!"

"How can this prevent me from being your friend, Hedda?"

"It does. You are a man, and you can control your emotions; you can sacrifice your sentiments to your intellectual and artistic ideal. But I . . . I . . . Well, suppose I fell in love with you?"

"You would do as I do, Hedda, sacrifice your feelings to your ideal."

"I could not, because . . . because I know not what love is! Ere I know, there can be no peace to me . . . no peace!"

"Poor child!" he said, and began trembling. She jumped up and confronted him.

"No, I am not a child! I am a woman who tries hard to pierce the mystery of life. I try hard to remain honest and sincere to myself, and I meet only men who want to play with me. . . . I thought you were my friend; you treat me as a child!"

"Forgive me, Hedda!"

"It is not your fault. . . . Oh, I am so miserable!"

"Take my hand, dear. I'll do what you want me to. I shall speak to you as you wish."

"Bernard, I want to know life . . . and love!"

He fell back and passed his hand over his brow, whence tears of sweat rolled down his cheeks; his nostrils were quivering.

"Hedda!" he said, "in order to know love, you must go to someone you love."

She placed her hands on the great marble statue of Sappho, and cast her eyes on the wall.

"There are but two men I could love. . . . There are but two men I may love. . . . One does not speak and does not suffer, it seems . . ."

"And the other?"

"And the other . . . does not speak . . . but suffers. . . . I know it. . . ."

"And the other?"

"Bernard, why do you torment me?"

"Hedda!"

There came a knock at the door, and the mail was passed through the letter-box. Sullivan took it, and walked back to the girl, who was crying with her head on her arms.

"May we both die if we do wrong," he said. And they fell in each other's arms.

DRONES

PART III

WHEN THE LEAVES FALL

CHAPTER IX

VICTOR'S WAY

LOVE brings, no doubt, an immense help to the strong; yet it is poison to the weak man who has no control over himself, no energy to work out his life, no power over the incidents and accidents thereof. Victor Wood was self-willed, but lacked all power and control over himself. Love had not lifted him above himself, and he was consequently ever hunting love. During the past six months he had travelled, stopped awhile in Paris, and, though not forgetting Hedda, he had loved other girls—Lucie among them.

And Lucie had loved him, given herself entirely to him who was too selfish ever to give himself, and then—too late—she had known about Hedda Vernon, and she had come to know what suffering was. She gave way to drink, but bottles hidden under her pillow—green, yellow, white bottles, beloved of the men of France—had brought no comfort to her, merely a few hours of drunken sleep in the morning.

The bottles could not bring her lover back. Had she been an adept in the magical sciences Lucie might have conquered the man; but she was not; and Once Cursed and Twice Blessed Typhon was but darkness and shadow to her. Neither did she dream that she

could ever win Victor again. She had seen Hedda, and knew that her own time had passed. She had not the heart and soul of Marguerite, nor her courage, and she wandered towards the nearest bridge over the Seine. The river, rushing rapidly towards the sea, bore with it all the debris of the city—rotten corpses, half-decomposed dogs and cats, and upturned boats.

Lucie, leaning over the parapet, watched the stream below, and waited for the spirit to dictate or for mental exhaustion to compel, unaware that the man she was dying for had strolled by the same spot a few minutes earlier, following with burning eyes the footsteps of a lady fair.

He was now in Sullivan's studio, where the sculptor lay on the couch, thinking over the possible consequences of Hedda's, and his own, love. The boy appeared very excited.

"Oh, Bernard," he said, "I have seen a most beautiful lady! She has gone to the *Ecole Militaire*. I had to run away for my life, after I had made so bold as to address her, and she laughed outright in my face!"

"What! Do you mean to say you followed a girl whom you don't know, that you spoke to her?"

"A lady, Sullivan!"

"Let it be! You are lucky she did not give you in charge, then!"

"I couldn't help it. She was so beautiful, and to see her walk was like watching the progress of a goddess."

"Yes, I know. But what of Hedda?"

"Eh? What's that to do with her?"

The Irishman went on pitilessly.

"What of Lucie?"

"Sullivan, what is the matter with you?"

"With me? H . . . m! You would not understand if I told you. Tell me, do you still love Hedda?"

"Why, of course!"

"Of course. Oh, I see! Have you been to see her?"

"No, I keep my promises. I shall go to-morrow, when the six months are over."

"You wish to marry her?"

"Yes. She will be a beautiful wife for me, and I am tired of knocking about."

"Oh, are you?"

Sullivan felt his temper rising. After a while, he spoke again.

"You know your father is coming to Paris?"

"Yes. He has accepted Colonel Sancroix's invitation. And, I say, Kathleen is coming too."

"Your sister! Yes, it is obvious. It cannot be, Victor," he said, answering their common thought.

"Are you busy?"

"No, not very. That is, I am expecting some one, your father's friend himself. He has written to me that his wife wanted to look through my works, and they will both be here soon. You'd better stay."

Victor sat and they chatted awhile, then fell into silence, their thoughts being far away. And presently the expected visitors arrived.

Colonel Sancroix was a thick-set red-faced little man with a drooping moustache. His eyes were not

unkind, but his nose was purple and deformed, his forehead low and narrow. He did not look unprepossessing when on horseback and in full uniform, but the bad cut of his bourgeois clothes and the stiff attitude he preserved when wearing them, put him now at a disadvantage, which was even accentuated by the prettiness of his wife, a lovely Parisienne covered with expensive furs. Colonel Sancroix was a fair sample of that product of the Franco-German War, the officer of a permanent army, wont to treat any one who was not a soldier as some inferior being.

He had not the slightest idea of what Art may mean to a man, or an Ideal. His range of thoughts went from ambition in his career to memories of his young days, passing by the corner-seat of his club, where he faced an ever-empty glass of vermouth or absinthe. His own world was limited; but his wife was clever, intelligent, and young, and she had quietly mastered him.

Her entrance caused Victor to start.

"Gad! Sullivan, this is the lady I left outside the *Ecole Militaire*," he grunted between his teeth.

The sculptor could not have heard him, for after Colonel Sancroix had introduced himself as the friend of their common friend, Mr. Wood, and named his wife, Sullivan introduced Victor Wood.

"We've met before, I believe," the lady said gently; the boy bowed, but did not answer.

The Colonel was very jealous, as old men are who marry young wives; he looked inquiringly from her to him, but she ignored the glance and addressed Victor.

"Are you also an artist, Mr. Wood?"

"No, a poet merely, madame."

"I thought so," she murmured, and as they had drawn a little apart, "you are very young . . . but very bold, Monsieur."

"Will you ever forgive my impertinence?"

"We shall see! Why did you follow me?"

They were looking at a little bust Sullivan had made of his friend.

"That's you?" she inquired.

"Yes. . . . Why I followed you? Because you are beautiful."

Madame Sancroix smiled prettily.

"You must come and see us," she said.

"Oh no! I dare not . . . I mean I should fall in love with you."

"Would you?"

She was flattered, but too much used to hearing such compliments to be quite taken by surprise. She called her husband.

"Henry, here is a bust of Mr. Wood; you will be able to see how Mr. Sullivan catches a likeness. Do you know, Mr. Sullivan," she went on, "I should love to see my head in marble."

"I have seldom dreamed of so happy a chance for me, Madame," the sculptor said, while the colonel began to take a dislike to all "artists."

Round they walked and admired, she prettily, with taste and *à propos*; he often blundering, but never troubled.

Finally they left, after renewed invitations to Victor and Sullivan.

"Why not come to-morrow night with your father, if he arrives in time?" said the colonel, anxious to have done with it. And the proposal being accepted, the two friends were left together.

CHAPTER X

THE SHORT WAY

THE tone of their conversation could, no more than the words they used, give us a fair insight into their personality. Both were gnawing their hearts at something; both tried hard to hide their own thoughts from one another. They talked and insulted one another and became sulky; finally, when words had run high, Victor left the studio, unaware of Hedda's visit to Bernard . . . and of its consequences.

The sculptor was far from satisfied with himself; he ought to have told the truth to Victor. But he had not, and the young man was on his way to Hedda Vernon's little studio. She was there, working already, happy, glancing now and then at her wrist-watch, awaiting the time when she would go to Bernard again and feel herself carried away in his strong embrace, to the land of Ideals.

It was a sign of her love suddenly increased to the utmost power that she had had no thought of Victor Wood. She knew now why he had kept away from her since the day she had almost promised to marry him, in England; but the knowledge did not bring her more in sympathy with him. She could have loved him had he been stronger, had he broken his promise

—or refused to give it; as it was, the weaker man had lost her—and justly so. She was a girl for the hero, not as a worshipper, but rather as an equal.

“Still at your brother’s head, Hedda,” he said, by way of introduction.

“Yes,” and she kept her hands busy.

“How long ago was it that he died?”

“Four years.”

“You have always felt his absence, Hedda, haven’t you?”

“I have, he was my brother, my friend, my whole family . . . and he was the best man I knew.”

“I can understand that, dear; you have never found a real friend since, have you?”

“Oh yes! Many . . . Are *you* not my friend?”

“Not as I should like to be.”

The boy warmed to his subject. He was in earnest; he loved Hedda now with his great imagination and his poetical nature.

“What do you mean,” she said, carelessly.

“Oh! you know, Hedda! You are showing me how much nearer you I might come if you told me of your brother, if you would teach me to be like him. Had I met him I should be a better man, I should know better how to help you. Something there is in me which tells me that I could take his place; that some of his spirit is in me.”

The girl sighed and turned to him, speaking tenderly.

“You have a great heart, Victor; a wonderful power of sympathy for a man! Perhaps one day you will use it as he did.”

"With your help, Hedda . . . Oh, Hedda! Have you forgotten? How can you speak to me of my future and not mention yourself in it? Have you no remembrance of that spring morning at home when you showed me your love?"

"I wanted you to rid yourself of that bitterness which was in your heart. Victor . . ." she added slowly: "Much has passed since then!"

"What do you mean, Hedda?"

A great fright overtook him.

"I will always be your friend, Victor. We will always trust each other. You . . . spoke of my brother, you . . . are . . . a brother to me. I can give you no more."

"Oh! Hedda. You cannot mean it! You know that I love you . . . I want more than that!"

"I can give you no more. Why do you torment me?"

"But why? What has happened?"

"I do not love you in the way you love me, Victor, and that is all that has happened."

The boy understood at last.

"You love another man."

The expression on her face said "yes."

"Who?" And his father's temper pierced through his tone.

"Please let me alone. Do not destroy our friendship."

"I want to know his name!"

"What does it matter?"

"Sullivan! It is Sullivan! That man!"

"I love him, dear!"

"*You . . . love . . . him!* Oh, what a fool I was!"

He sat down, unable to withhold his tears. She went to him.

"He is your friend."

"He! my friend . . . a blackguard . . . a liar . . ."

"Victor, I cannot let you say this, I love him . . ."

"I shall kill him!"

And he turned to the door which opened before he had reached it and the man whose life he wanted to take confronted him. Sullivan had heard enough to guess the rest.

"No, you won't," he said simply. He was once more himself, the Sullivan that had been hidden of late. He was very stern and master of himself.

With but a glance in Hedda's direction he went on:

"It would make you twice a murderer in one day! Go to the 'Morgue,' you silly kid, and see the dead body of our poor little Lucie!"

"Lucie!"

The exclamation came from the lips of both; from Hedda's in a cry of pity, in a cry of surprise from Victor's.

"Is this true?" the boy said at last.

"True! I have seen her, I tell you. And you . . . killed her . . . I know it, because she told me . . . herself . . . to-day!"

Victor Wood was out of the room already.

CHAPTER XI

THE LONGER WAY

“O H, Bernard! Hadn't you better go after him? He might in his despair follow her!”

She had not a thought for herself; she did not reflect upon the strangeness of Victor's attitude. Yet she had never heard anything of his relations with Lucie, and the man had just proposed to her.

Her lover answered with a sneer which he could not repress even at this moment.

“He! No fear!”

He was right . . . and wrong. When Mr. Wood arrived in Paris with his family on the following day, he had to claim his son from the *Infirmerie du Dépôt*, where wandering madmen are taken . . .

The wide distance which separates a man like Sullivan and a man like Victor Wood is emphasized by the attitude of Marguerite compared with that of Lucie. Marguerite is now happy . . . and works hard . . . and paints well.

And Sullivan married Hedda after all, in spite of their common scorn of conventions. He is now a

great artist, and she . . . well, the young artists of the Quartier grunt and say that she will be very unhappy, having given up Art and her freedom. Hedda can afford to smile at their prejudice, because of her two boys.

MESCAL

To
G. M. Marston

MESCAL

An account of Frater Jean des Epineuses, his journey upwards; how he came to the highest sprout of the highest branch of the Tree; and how he was bathed in the huge Bowl which containeth the intellectual Nectar, and lost himself, and thereby found himself, sitting above the celestial Vault of Heaven.

FRATER JEAN, the itinerant preacher, was a man of our century, yet Frater Jean seemed as if he had just come out from the Thelème Abbaye, whereof the motto is, was, and shall be, "Fais ce que veulx." He was young, short in stature, perfectly angleless, and his rosy feet, bare above the thick-soled sandals, had ripples like to the soft velvety thigh of a suckling babe. His eyes were dark and big, thickly eyebrowed and long eyelashed. He had, in spite of his youth, three chins, clean shaven, and much admired by his brethren. These he had cultivated in honour of the Unum autem Trinum (blessed be His threefold name!).

The happiest man in his convent, however.

The care of the faithful often brought Frater Jean in many strange lands and places. Wherever he went, his coming was hailed with delight by wenches and

stable boys, who had many a merry smile for his wonderful narrative capacities. Once he came upon an inn where lay, at the article of death, a traveller of the far distant oceans. Frater Jean offered his services as a minister of the true religion of Rome, and was allowed by the sick man to hear the weary confession of his shortcomings. When the penitent had committed his sins to the memory of Frater Jean, and felt at peace with his God, he addressed the cord-belted monk:

"I know your Order is forbidden to accumulate riches, and what beggars all of you are. But I am now dying of the joy that kills, and you spoke to me as one who deserves whatever happiness can be bestowed upon him from the outside world. Here is a bottle, Frater, which contains exactly the dose which will equibalance your remarkable powers. It has no name, it is black as hell, and therefore comes down from heaven."

"There is very little of it," Frater Jean said.

"There is enough to send you up, like a shot, right above the Throne. It will take you to Heaven, Frater."

"Once only."

"You will never dwell on earth again, Frater."

The beggar monk accepted the phial and returned to his convent. He tasted two drops of the contents thereof, found them bitter, and placed the phial upon a shelf, where it lay for months.

Once an inquisitive fellow asked what it was that the bottle contained. Frater Jean merely smiled, and

said that it was a remedy to be given him when he should appear unable to fulfil the duties of his ministry.

And the time went on. Frater Jean wore many a pair of sandals on the high roads. He was a good monk, if any monk ever was, and prayed to God earnestly; but he was no worshipper of MAAT, Queen of Truth, who is in GOD, of GOD, and GOD-self, and therefore Frater Jean was, at times, somewhat of a sickly burden to himself.

On a certain Thursday evening, Frater Jean had a feeling that events of importance were happening, which caught him in their revolving spiral. An hour later, he was elected to a post of greater trust.

An hour later again, Frater Jean had to remove his handful of monachal possessions into another cell, elsewhere situated. The little bottle caught his eye, and unwittingly, instinctively, he drank its contents. Frater Jean was in the most complete ignorance of the planets and their influence. Jupiter and Mars were favourable, and the scheme of his nativity showed that their favourable influence would prove useful to Frater Jean. But he did not know. Frater Jean had kept an open mind upon every important subject, and, when he worshipped, he was but worshipping symbols, however sincere and earnest might his worship be.

Frater Jean attended to his duties for an hour or so, until chapel time, when he joined his brothers.

II

IT was then that Frater Jean surprised his brothers. The burning incense and the glorious harmony of their voices, the slow, rhythmical ceremonies of their ritual, the spiritual atmosphere created by their sympathetic, mystical personalities, all these had upon Frater Jean the most extraordinary effect. Never had he felt himself so much detached from the world; his body was fit as it had never been, his heart was beating to the tune of his ecstasy. His soul was slowly freeing itself, as a traveller who gives a last kiss to his friends ere he starts on a pleasant journey.

Frater Jean saw things as they are, and recognized them by their colours. He, who had been known as a man of the flesh, realized what much greater felicity can be enjoyed than the mere physical delights, however holy one may be.

It had, of course, begun gradually. Globes of light were thrown at him from above and caused him to laugh, laughter being the only outward sign which he found sufficiently adequate to express his impressions. But he soon mastered his sensations and mentally returned the multicoloured globes to the hands that sent them. And he went onwards. He walked on a road covered with petals of flowers. Brightly clad

attendants made him the honours and curtsied to him as he passed.

Again Frater Jean laughed, for they were grinning and smiling upon him. He felt an intense pity—wholly sympathetic, for his brothers.

They—in spite of all efforts to remain calm and to proceed with the Office—had their eyes glued upon his face. He wore an ecstatic look.

The Superior touched his elbow and Frater Jean walked in front to the altar and made penance, lying at full length, his lip to the cold stones below the first step. But his vision was thereby merely directed unto another channel.

Mary, the Mother of God, seated upon a Throne of Gold, was ascending to Heaven, and smiled upon him and bade him follow. Vicious-looking demons grinned and stood between Her and him. Frater Jean laughed aloud and they went away behind the throne.

Then he rose and spoke and the service was interrupted.

“Pater, dicere?”

The Father Superior joined him and felt his pulse. He shook his head and turned to the brothers.

“Frater Jean has received the blessing of the Holy Ghost,” he said. “Let us pray with him and implore the blessing of God upon him.”

“Te Deum laudamus! Te Dominum confitemur!”

Frater Jean went onwards again, followed all the while by the voices of his brethren. Now and then he would shriek with laughter, express various feelings of perfect delight with his hands, his arms, all his body.

When they ceased singing, he spoke aloud, more to himself than to them.

“The whole world is a cause of happiness, and a cause of laughter. I see the three-coloured vision and here are its letters. It is *M*, of the colour of the rising sun, that createth all things. It is *N*, of the colour of the lightning, the strength that breaks all things. It is *A*, of the colour of the moon that unites them both.

“Now *M* is white, *N* is red, *A* is yellow. . . . There is too much yellow,” he said, and he laughed, childlike. Then he became silent. A little later he spoke again.

“There are two men, the wise man and the man intelligent by himself. The others are not and cannot be.

“O God, great in thy mercies, you have shown me the whole world and given it unto me, into my own hands.

“O God, the others are worms, that snake before you. They do not count. It is you and I on the one side, and all the world on the other.

“O God, ever-existent; O God, Saviour of the world! O God of the races gone by! O God of the world of to-morrow!

“Hail! Hail! HAIL UNTO THEE, Christ-Osiris, O great king of the inferior world! Thou art yesterday, father of to-day, the never-to-be-forgotten cause of to-morrow!

“Lo! I converse with the HAWK, who is the vault of heaven! The LAST of the Gods that shall reign upon Earth.”

Then Frater Jean burst again into laughing and made the sign of the revolving of the wheel. Then he spoke.

“A curse upon men!” he said. “A whip and a lash for men! An iron rod for men! A curse, a triple curse upon their man-made gods. Brothers, your singing and praying and fasting are as useless to the unwise or the unintelligent as an empty glass is to a thirsty man!”

He laughed again, louder and longer than previously. And his brothers, pained beyond thoughts, took Frater Jean to his cell, where he lay awake all night, laughing, seeing God face to face, and explaining the world to himself, as clearly and simply as he saw it—as IT IS.

The next day Frater Jean left his convent (looking as Moses did, after he came down from the Holy Mount), and he went in search of his armies.

The monks never understood—much less the outer world wherein slumbereth humanity.

THE DREAMS OF
B. A. FULSON

To
All Social Reformers
I inscribe
This Tale

THE DREAMS OF B. A. FULSON

Hito Koyetaru-ga yuyé-ni tatuto Karazu;

Ti aru-wo motte, tatuto-si to su.—*Japanese Proverb.*

I

THE light became more vivid and bright, as if some unseen being had noiselessly placed a penny in the slot. It is a holy thirst for simple truth which makes me state this in such terms and use such similes. I crave for veracity. I, Benjamin Anton Fulson, would die rather than leave the path of Truth. And therefore I express myself in the truest nouns and adjectives.

Upon reflection, the increased vividness and brightness of the light could *not* be attributed to any human hand. I was in a field. In the middle of a ripe cornfield. And I remember that a flabby red poppy stood between my feet. ISIS it was, no doubt, who had given a renewed power to the star.

For there was a star. It shone first right above me, twenty feet or so ahead. It had seven branches of light and seven shadows, and whirled round its axis at a speed which exceeded my computative power. Quicker, at any rate, than the too slow revolving march of the Wheel of Fortune.

All of a sudden a miracle happened; the Star of the Seven branches was but a dream, and instead of it I was beholding with a fakirish stare that thing which the French call "*La Grande Roue*." Fifty centimes did I pay, and the man-made monster had me within one of its tentacles.

Second miracle: I did not come down. When at the highest point reachable, the waggon in which I sat alone, not afraid, burst open, and an attractive force gripped me, pulled me, carried me away. I felt myself thrown upwards.

Some time in the afternoon I landed. A funny little creature met my glances as I looked about me.

"Hullo! where have you been in this attire?" he said, rolling his *r*'s like a Highlander.

I had no time to answer: the vain being starting again:

"What do you think of my dress, friend? I shall, if you wish, have one like it made for you. You are a stranger in these parts. So am I."

"Oh, are you?" I said, uncompromisingly.

"Yes." And he coughed and went on: "Will you be my prince, old chap?"

He is a crank, I thought; and answered:

"Yes."

"I shall take you to the palace; you'll have a ripping time. Let us go, eh?"

"Yes."

"By your answers," he said gravely, "I can see that

indeed you are a prince. They show your extremely acute intellect and perfect sense of the word to say upon every occasion."

"Yes," I managed to put in cleverly.

"Quite so," he answered. "Well, for a few hours, or days, perhaps I, a pure spirit, shall be the distinguished ambassador of a country still in a state of under-civilization, but which they all fear, for it supplies nearly the whole globe with stones of various colours and values. I am in the body of one of the noblest among the noblest of that land."

The poor spirit, I thought, was far from decorous, and I did not conceal my opinion, which made him laugh heartily. Spirits are free from our little susceptibilities.

He looked almost like a kangaroo, and I found out afterwards that all the inhabitants had the same appearance. His head was slim and pointed, his arms very short, while the legs, long, supple, and twisted, allowed him fanciful capers, which he enjoyed as a child would. He put in front of me a box filled with brown pebbles, saying that their monetary value was considerable. He then helped me to buckle on a dress, thin, but very warm, made of stuff of a curiously-prepared texture. I began by trying to skip as he did, but with uncommon difficulty, although, after a while, and with many falls and bruises, I was able to follow him towards the houses.

On arriving at a splendid palace, surmounted by a square-headed eagle cut in black stone, my guide bade me enter, and followed me, while a double row

of valets in pink and yellow garments bowed respectfully.

As soon as we were comfortably installed, the spirit addressed me as follows:

"I slipped in the place of a friend of mine under the skin of the old ambassador I mentioned to you, while he was swallowing a certain liquid which upsets the heads of the people in this country. He was stupefied with drink. As long as I shall stay with you, you will remain in this house, where you will be able to notice some odd customs.

"You are, don't forget it, the chief's son and heir of a rather savage country, scarcely known yet; and you came here on a visit to the King of this land. Your race is white, which is very rare upon this planet, and generally taken as a sign of profound unintelligence. You are supposed to move about by skipping with your legs divided, while we jump with our two legs at the same time. As for the language, your soul will know it presently, I shall make it my next business. Withal, do not be afraid or anxious; you are, with this box, the richest being on the globe. There are in it stones brought by some friends of mine who live in a neighbouring planet, where these things are considered of very little value.

"Wise without wisdom he who wealth doth own;
His is all knowledge though he naught hath known.

"Fear not," he added, "you will be the 'lion' of the drawing-rooms. Even to-night, during the reception I hold in your honour, you will be able to see it.

And now, young man, you must sleep the sleep of the just. I am going to teach your soul the Kangaroo tongue. For it would take much too long for *your* intellect to learn it."

II

I AWOKE after five minutes, to hear the voice of the spirit-ambassador.

"Done! your soul understands Kangaroo." (I give hereafter the name of Kangaroo tongue to the language used in the country, because of my limitations; I find it utterly impossible to reproduce the odd consonance of the native equivalent.) The spirit went on:

"It has taken me a little longer than I thought at first. The fact is, that the part of your soul which once upon a time was a breeze in the perfumed airs encircling a certain balmy island of rest, has not yet recovered from the joyful stir it felt during its prank of a night with its sisters. I hope you will see that it keeps in order and does not remain so frivolous. However, it is settled. They will now come and dress you in a way that will both respect the costumes of this country and allow you a certain freedom. A kind of half and half."

And the moment after, I was surrounded by portly valets. As the Royal Princess, I could say:

*"I took my bath of scented milk, delicately waited on;
They burnt sweet things for my delight, cedar and cin-
namon,
They lit my shaded silver lamp, and left me there alone."*

But they soon came back, carrying in a long procession all the parts of a magnificent garment. There was no gold or silver on it, for these metals are of no value in the place; but the dress was not lacking in picturesque gracefulness. A fine light texture clothed my body and was cleverly cut in order to hide as far as possible the length of my arms, while my legs appeared finer and my feet longer. Oh! very much longer! almost like Kangaroo feet. I felt a certain difficulty in using them, but within an hour, spent in practising with a dancing master, I learned how to hop and skip like a native.

The shade of my clothes would set your teeth on edge. It was a horrible blend of light red, bright yellow, and sky green, and it was painted with some humorous pictures, surrounded with letters of the alphabet, enumerating my official titles. And what a show!

Calls after calls, deputations after deputations, brought me at each time a new dignity. The King of the country sent me by various officials the badges of his Orders. Order of the BELL, Order of the CUCKOO, Order of the BRACES, and the TRIANGLE of AGRICULTURAL MERIT. The latter arrived quite unexpectedly, and the painters had not painted it beforehand on my clothes; so that they had to do it while I waited. Thus one could have read on my back (I transcribe it in English characters):

G.C.B.; C.O.; K.B.O.; L.B.S.C.R., etc., etc., etc.

In the front, over a picture describing two birds singing with their beaks opened, and a fox admiring

them from below, were written my foreign titles, *i.e.*, the appellations which my supposed-to-be subjects were giving to me, *sub poena mortis*.

"*Most High Son of the Sacred Tree, Brother of the Loftiest Stars, Most Eminent Offspring of the first living Cell, Father of all Good, Step-mother of all Evil, King of Kings, etc., etc.*"

All through the evening I had to endure the meanest vileness of the flattering Kangaroos. Scarcely had the last artist put the last touch to the T.A.M., which had just been bestowed upon me, when the valets returned, holding huge candlesticks in the fashion of an antique statue. After them came high officers, private and public chamberlains, a great chaplain and a little one; the latter, full of wit, remarking very cleverly to me, after the formal introduction, and when he had been honoured with the privilege of walking on my feet (a high distinction, somewhat like our ancient *baise-mains*):

"Although your Royal Highness is not of our religion, we nevertheless serve the same Master." (No doubt he was referring to his King, but maybe to the pebbles. Who knows?)

After him came the long file of ambassadors, and for each of them my soul dictated me a gentle word (the deuce if I know what I said, my thoughts being at the time set upon the comic aspect of the show!). After a while everyone retired, and I remained alone with my old friend, the manager-spirit, who had become my friend as well as my impresario.

"Eh bien," said he, while hopping, "what do you

think of this good people Kangaroo? Are they not real fools to take you as a real prince?"

"But! . . . surely . . . I don't think," I said, quite vexed. "I believe that I look quite up to . . ."

"Yes! Most Eminent Offspring of the first living Cell! Stepmother of all Evil . . . Ah! Ha!"

His laugh was painful to me. He noticed it and changed the subject.

"To-night," he went on, more seriously, "you are giving a party, an artistic supper in this house, after the function, and the King himself will honour you with his presence. As for now, you dine alone; company would not be in accordance with the protocol. But you had better restrain your appetite, as this evening you are expected to eat copiously, especially red meat, according to the customs of the country you are supposed to rule. Try and look a little savage, drink deeply, and all will admire you. Here is a spoonful of a marvellous liquor. The old soft man in whom I am actually dwelling is accustomed—wise thing for a diplomat—to drink this before the formal dinners. He is thus enabled to hold up his senses whatever quantity of intoxicating liquids he may choose to soak himself in.

"And now, immediately after you have drunk the oily liquor, please swallow this white pill left for you by your friends. It is your meal. Then we shall proceed to the state rooms, where the ladies are anxiously awaiting your arrival. If you do not see me, and need my presence, you will have only to concentrate your thoughts upon me and I shall hasten towards you.

While you enjoy yourself, I shall take that old fleshy frame of mine into a quiet corner, let it sleep, and go myself butterflying, imperceptible to the sight." And he led me to the salons.

Two and two my guides behind, two and two before,
Two and two on either hand . . .

In that order we came in. The orchestra started playing a strange march,

"Your national anthem," whispered the ambassador-spirit.

It was by no means a fine one. It struck me as being very much akin to some of Wagner's music, rendered by a German band after seven hours of rambling about the West End squares. Worse even! The instruments, too, were very different from ours, and at times the whole orchestra would leap near to the ceiling and fall again with a clacking of their long feet and a hoarse yell.

I proceeded, hopping my best, and trying to appear as much savage-of-Earl's-Court-Exhibition-like as I could. I was met by the sympathetic ambassadors, chamberlains, chaplains—some the worse for drink—who had been introduced to me in my private chambers. Behind, lackadaisical, were the Kangaroo ladies. I could not refrain from chuckling. My cunning smile, which was prompted by this comical appearance and the dauby painted dresses in which they were arrayed (h'm), filled with delight the graceful creatures. All together, they skipped and fell back with a clacking of their feet. Some of the most important were introduced to me, and unhappily they were among the ugliest. My pre-

cious adviser whispered a few words, and I made a sign with my head, to indicate that I did not want the party to be interrupted any longer. Then they started dancing.

The noble art of dancing consists, among the Kangaroos, in putting themselves back to back, by pairs, and then in skipping lightly, cadenced by the orchestra already mentioned (and qualified). I had to invite three ladies, but, happily, they were prevented by the weight of many decades from doing more than a slight attempt at hopping, and this rather suited me. When that formal business was over, I was surrounded by the most important persons, who were spying for the first word of my tongue, like flowers longing for the dew. I was not without anxiety for the language used by my spirit. I suppose all was for the best, for, hardly had I spoken, when murmurs of admiration burst from the courtiers.

One of the flatterers cleverly alluded to the possible beauties of my native tongue, and I could not resist the temptation to give them a piece of my mind, well aware that they could not understand. With an amiable and condescending smile, I began quietly:

*“ You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o’ the rotten fens, whose love I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men,
That do corrupt my air . . . ”*

The compliment appeared to be appreciated. I then continued in German:

“ Lumpen und Quark,
Der Ganze Mark!

Sind nicht den Teufel wert!
Weitmaulichte Laffen,
Felischen und Gaffen,
Gaffen und Kaufen
Bestienhaufen."

"This," said immediately my friend spirit, "is in another dialect. It is spoken by the members of a tribe which His Royal Highness is going to rule at the death of his illustrious father. They are the most manly of all his subjects; and women are by them treated as of quite secondary importance. But His Royal Highness is far from sharing this opinion, and finds the ladies here charming."

A cluck echoed these ironical words, and off they all went for a new skip.

All of a sudden, the orchestra struck up the Royal Anthem, and the blue-faced King of the country entered. From the short conversation we had together, with the help of the spirit interpreter, he seemed to me the wisest and wittiest of the whole.

"Why do we need all these swankers around us to walk on the honourable feet of each other?" he muttered.

I could not but agree with the wise King, and the interpreter conveyed to him my admiration for his judicious mind. We then retired with the spirit-ambassador to an adjoining chamber, followed by the respectful looks of the assembly. Do not expect me to betray the State secrets . . .

After a while, the King left me, and the spirit began laughing. On my questions, he answered that a mar-

riage was to be arranged between myself and a young princess of the royal blood, niece of the King, whose pretty face was of a delightful blue. I protested energetically, but my guide promised me that everything would go well after my departure, and suggested that I might as well allow myself that extra divertisement. I accepted.

The news spread in the wink of an eye, and a royal chamberlain entered the room, congratulated privately the ambassador, and himself painted on his back with a little brush the letters T.A.M. as a token of the great pleasure felt by his august master.

They both retired almost immediately, the chamberlain to resume his duties, and the spirit to put in bed his fleshy frame. When he returned he began sauntering invisible around me. I had been, during his absence, introduced to the blue princess, and, squatting down, after the fashion of the country, I was enjoying a pleasant though wordless conversation with her.

III

AFTER a short conversation necessarily reduced to commonplaces, the spirit, who had just reintegrated the body of the old ambassador, came to inform the blue princess that His Majesty was waiting for her. She left me; and soon afterwards I followed my guide into the ballroom. A snobbish smile brightened the blue faces, and it got on my nerves to see their servility. I could not possibly stand it, and soon withdrew to my private apartments.

Scarcely had I been there a few minutes when the little chaplain asked for an audience.

"Your Royal Highness," he said, "I am directed to discuss the most important subject of religion. It is quite plain that the high honour bestowed by Your Highness upon our whole nation and the Princess Royal in particular demands on our part certain concessions. Your august fiancée will certainly be very happy to acknowledge, after a few interviews with your private chaplain, the truth and beauty of the religion followed in your own States. Still, there are certain susceptibilities to be respected."

"What?" exclaimed the ambassador, with whom I left the matter. "But it is only too natural. Tell me,

please, Your Reverence, do you sincerely believe in the religion you are ministering?"

The chaplain glanced quietly around the room and answered:

"Sir, really, I receive so many pebbles for this, that I should prove very little cleverness by not asserting the sincerity of my faith."

His cant and unctuous Jesuitism prompted me to bring the interview to an end. I reached for my box of pebbles and gave him a handful of them. He thanked me with exaggeration, agreeing that he never had so many at a time in his possession; and he informed me that he was, at last, to see the dream of his life realized: To build a magnificent cathedral with a private house for himself and the philosopher's garden.

"After all," he said, smiling, "there is only one God."

"Yes," said I, "we say the same thing."

*Ζεὺς ἐστὶν αἰθὴρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός
Ζεὺς τοι τὰ πάντα, χῶ τι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον."*

He quickly jumped away from my erudition and the ambassador informed me that the hour for the official banquet had come.

"If the King uses the words of sincere friendship and of alliance," he added, "here is the written answer that you will give in his tongue. Should he, on the contrary, appear satisfied with a few commonplaces on the union of nations and his personal friendship with your Imperial Father, then must you speak in your earthly language, which I shall interpret myself."

I promised him to follow his diplomatic advice and we proceeded to the State dining-room. It was a supper after the dance and accordingly all things went without too much fuss and ceremony. I did my best to keep up to the standard of my future subjects and ate and drank to the utmost of my capacity. When the time of speeches came, I felt a little relieved with the hope of a near conclusion. It was quite time! The courses had been numerous and heavy; you could not believe what bad cooks these Kangaroos are! I was swollen and all but stupefied, like a suburban dog on Christmas day, when the fare is abounding.

The King stood, his cup in hand:

"Your Royal Highness," he said with a sonorous voice, "I drink to your August Father, to the rich and glorious Nation which you are representing. I drink to the peace and to the alliance between our two peoples, well pleased that I am to contemplate the happy ties that will fortify between them a long standing friendship. I trust that the peace of the world will be secured by a union based upon a common respect and a like desire of happiness for our subjects. I drink the health of your Royal Highness."

He spoke, and from all tables ascended murmurs of acclamation. The Kangaroos then jumped up to the ceiling (some knocking their heads badly), and the noise of their feet, clacking as they fell back, marked their satisfaction. The orchestra played the Royal Anthem. With a restrained emotion, and much afraid lest I should lose a single drop of the nectar contained in my cup, I read the following words:

“Sire, I was glad to hear the gracious words which Your Majesty has just pronounced. I am certain that my Royal Father and the whole of my People will feel a great joy and pride when they hear of it. The happy event which is going to strengthen between our two nations the bonds of friendship will certainly permit us to work with a renewed activity and a stronger feeling of security for the happiness of our subjects. I drink to Your Majesty, to Her Majesty the Queen, and to Your Royal Family.”

And I took a long draught. The acclamations and jumps began anew, while resounded the march which I had heard at the beginning of the function. The banquet soon came to an end, and everyone retired. Not without some trouble, the spirit went to put to bed the flesh and bones of the old ambassador and returned afterwards. He gracefully walked about my couch in the shape of a stout bug, and told me a great many scandals about the country. Seeing then that I desired to sleep, he wished me a good night and became invisible and speechless.

When I awoke it was daylight, and one of the secretaries brought me the morning papers. He was soon followed by the ambassador, who dismissed him and rapidly began to translate me the “leaders” commenting upon my betrothal and the banquet of the preceding night. One paper praised much my dignified and sober toast, while the next tried to ridicule the idea of a marriage between two races so different. Apparently it was all the fault of the government then in power, which had in that ha’penny sheet a worthy

opponent. A third one spoke of the financial security it brought to their nation, to have formed a close alliance with a country so rich in pebbles. All of them gave the menus and the text *in extenso* of both speeches, and I shall indeed feel all my life a deep sorrow for not having kept those. But there was other news. "Do you know," said the spirit, "I am afraid we must depart from here. There will be a row, very soon. I just now feel that our little trickery will soon be discovered. The people in the embassy who had been in the country we are supposed to come from, I dismissed yesterday before coming to meet you. But the others even begin to grow suspicious. Let us make ourselves scarce and let them unravel the matter alone—*en famille*, you know. I shall have to think of some shift."

I had such confidence in the wisdom of the spirit, whom I now know to be the familiar demon of some big-headed friends of mine, that I had no fear. Even the idea of the muddle in which the people there would find themselves, after our flight, especially the gentry and nobility, made me laugh heartily. "After all," said I to the ambassador, "they will have something to talk about, for I thought their subjects of conversation rather slow, and limited in number."

"Yes," he answered, while I followed him through a little hidden door, "they ought rather to think of the thousand starving Kangaroos who cannot afford a seat at such expensive dinners. I think of changing our disguise and taking you among them, in case our friends could not come at my request."

We were at the time in the country, and dark clouds began to gather themselves above us. I soon recognized the place where I had landed, and as I was looking up for some taxiplane, the soil began to shake and quake under my feet. All of a sudden, the part of land on which I was standing was severed from the globe, and I was thrown into space, passenger of a new aerolith some fifty yards square. My friend made some frightened signals to me, but in vain. Seeing how utterly useless it was to try and seize me in time, he dropped instantly his Kangaroo shape and soon joined me in the form of a butterfly.

"I did not find anything better at hand," he said by way of apology. I assured him that he was really very nice looking and asked him where we were going at such a pace. I was already accustomed to travelling in the air, and could not perceive the danger of the situation. On the contrary, I was rather inclined to enjoy the incident, finding myself becomingly attired, with my Kangaroo suit and my titles painted on my clothes, although, as you may say, what was the good of being T.A.M. now, and L.B.S.C.R.?

The butterfly, reading my thoughts, whispered gently:

Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness;
This is the state of Man.

"Yes," I answered,

And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hop again.

"Never mind," said the spirit, "we are not dead yet, there is hope left to us. Oh! d . . . n!"

This surprising exclamation was caused by a sudden jump. How I did jump! What a shock!

"A point of conjunction," he explained.

"What? Clapham Junction?"

"Are you deaf, sir? We are at a point of meeting between the zone of attraction of three stars. That is why we thus dance. We are attracted from three parts at a time. I am afraid we shall die. One of the three will soon absorb us."

This unremitting toss worked my poor stomach, and I felt more and more the need of a breakfast. As some American puts it:

Fasting is all very well for those
Who have to contend with invisible foes,
But I am quite sure it does not agree
With a quiet, peaceable man like me.

Alas, on our little flying island there was nothing for me to eat, save a pretty young frog, rolling two scared eyes, which appeared disagreeably surprised at that long journey far from the ancestral marsh. Being a practical vegetarian¹ I could not even dream of such a meal.

¹ The author begs here to insist upon the fact that he is in no way connected nor in sympathy with such noxious fads.

IV

HAPPILY we had not long to wait for the expected shock. As my spiritual friend had informed me, we had first to be absorbed by a planet or star more audacious and stronger than the two others, in order that I might gratify the exigences of my stomach.

I nearly lost my perpendicular when it happened. A large parcel of the land on which I was got loose, and quick as a thunderbolt was precipitated to one of the stars. I knelt on all fours, next to the little frog, and the butterfly perched on my shoulder. I then thought of Death and of its truest definition; "Death is a change, a transformation," wondering what shifting could be mine. My kingdom was now very limited, and, twined to the soil, I was anxiously awaiting the final catastrophe.

In place of the threatening toss, I began sliding, and so slowly and lightly it was that the sensation was most delightful. Gently but surely, one of the stars was absorbing us; in less than a minute after, I found myself with the butterfly and the frog, landed on a waste field, close by a village of a few large huts. All at once we were surrounded by some individuals, whom I shall not attempt to describe, as they looked almost

exactly as we do. They did not, however, seem to think the same, owing to my strange Kangaroo-like attire. Seeing them naked as worms, save one of them who wore a pair of spectacles, I quickly threw away my linen clothes, in order that they should recognize me for a man. While the clothes were by them closely inspected, I started walking towards their huts; the fools began bawling at me. The frog had disappeared and the butterfly-spirit also appeared to have deserted me. The situation was a difficult one.

Putting a hand to my lips, and moving my jaws up and down at the same time, I succeeded at last in conveying to them the fact that I was exceedingly hungry. The gesture must be more than human, for they understood me immediately. Thank Goodness, the people there are not fed on pills. They brought me some delicious fruits, and in a wooden cup grossly worked a beverage which tasted almost like coconut milk. While I was eating and drinking, the spirit, having left the butterfly shape, came back tumbling lightly around my head.

"Do not fear," he said. "We have fallen among a very tame tribe of natives. Their temper is gentle, and civilization has not as yet spoiled them. They are descended from an animal race deprived of the gift of speech. A story which is still told by their elders goes that a family of these animals discovered one day with great surprise that their only child was articulating various sounds very different from their own simple and primitive vocabulary. Their first feeling was one of shame and anger, and they thought themselves dishonoured.

But they died of their rage and the son found a wife who was willing to brave exile for his sake. They had children who, in their turn, were able to speak as their father did. The possibility of exchanging their impressions by means of a clear and definite language helped them by and by to become masters of their less fortunate contemporaries. These accepted servitude with a light heart because they were kindly treated. With the greater safety and comfort, their masters brought them to the realization of their bliss. These servants had never known such happiness during their life of freedom. This is contrary to your old saying about the relations of patrons and servants, is it not?"

"Which saying?" I asked.

"Oh! you know very well.

A baker's wife may bite of a bun,
 A brewer's wife may drink of a tun,
 A fishmonger's wife may feed on a conger;
 But a serving-man's wife may starve for the hunger."

The spirit being imperceptible to their eyes, the good savages were rather surprised to hear me talk all by myself. One of them (the one who was dressed in spectacles) came forward and began a long speech which I could not understand, although it sounded very pretty. I only perceived some words which came often from his mouth; it was something which sounded very much like this:

"Cairotakista Kaislaupo."¹

¹ This reminded me of the signboard hung over the door of an intelligent barber of Athens, inviting all men to step into the shop, where they should be shaved quickly and in silence.

I let him speak without interruption, and when he had dried up I explained by my gestures, thus following the advice of the spirit, that I had fallen from the sky. All the while that silly ghost had been whispering in my ear some remarkably funny things which nearly caused me to burst with laughter. The natives appeared to believe my explanation, and, a thing which surprised me, they did not fall on their knees to worship me. They were, I suppose, quite free of any superstition. They indicated their village, begging me to walk towards it. But, all of a sudden, the situation was altered.

One of them, probably a sentry or a village guardian, was running towards them, shouting and barking like a cur. As the spirit explained to me, their huts were going to be attacked by a troop of civilized men. I put my clothes on in a great hurry, and, willing to pay for my board, I dashed on the heels of the natives and soon outran them. Scarcely had the enemy seen a Kangaroo making for them with all his might, in his complete war attire, with signs painted on his chest, than they began to rush in disorder. Hunted by me, while the natives threw stones at them, they fell like dead flies.

Some mortally, some slightly touched, some falling
Merely through fear; that the straight field was damned
With dead men, hurt behind, and cowards living
To die with lengthened shame.

They were still running when I heard once more the voice of my friend:

“It is quite time that you should return home, old

man," he said, "I must take a passage to-morrow on board the great Comet which starts in the evening for its long journey. You know the one I mean—the comet which passes near your globe every 567 years. Ah! there will be some quaint events the next time it comes to you! I suppose you do remember the past happenings?"

"Oh, yes!" said I, "a great historian has written some pages about it. And in this appearance explains the tradition which Varro has preserved that under his reign the planet Venus changed her colour, size, figure and course."

"Exactly," answered the demon. "This will happen to you also in the year 2255."

"May I come with you on the comet? I should feel so grateful to you."

What a nice place to be in!

What a nice place, I am sure!

"*Impossible*," said he. "You *must* return. Only, pray, let me give you some good advice. I know you are, or pretend to be, a bit of a philosopher, and I have in consequence prepared the following speech for your benefit."

And the pedant began:

"Do not trouble or concern yourself about killing the people who are opposed to your own ideas, and do not try to force upon their brains a premature revolution. There are no 'primeurs' in the human mind. Nothing but that which comes ripe and in its season. You have not been born to the world for anticipations,

but only for the purpose of presenting always a ready supply for the *possible* wants and needs of Nature. Apart from this reason—which will remain a *reason* until you come to the state of mind which we now enjoy—you have not been created for any definite purpose. When you developed from the inferior races into primitive men by a most unexpected leap, Nature felt, no doubt, a disagreeable surprise. She never conceived such a freak. Do not try now to think of Her as having a definite scheme, and cease expecting that human reason, human forces, can change anything; unless Nature be ready for the change. All that is happening, and will happen, is a perceived result of some unperceived event. Whenever you find a mystery or a miracle it only means that the preliminary happening is unknown to you. Be quiet and calm; never grow tired of the joys of life; enjoy the world, laugh at your fellow men, and do not miss laughing at yourself. Be not too selfish, for the working of this quality necessitates too much energy and mental power. Do not be harsh to others, and prevent their harshness from hurting you. If anyone is gentle and patient towards you, be gentle and patient towards him. If working amuses you, work; if not, rest yourself and let those who like it take care of you. Dixi!”

The lesson had the effect of calling me back from my dream, if a dream it was.

A DEVIL OF A TALE

To that most subtle reincarnated soul

Aleister Crowley

I inscribe this the first tale of

Elphénor.

A DEVIL OF A TALE

“MASTER, have you ever witnessed the ceremony of Sri-Chakra by the worshippers of the *Sakti*?”

The question was put innocently enough by an impossible Probationer to Elphénor Pistouillat de la Ratiboisière, the great French Adept. He showed no sign that the words had caught his ear, and went on with the tale of some experiences he had undergone in India. The impossible Probationer, alias “I am the One,” alias the “Unique,”¹ renewed his question.

“I say, what is there of truth about the worshippers of the *Sakti* and the ceremony of Sri-Chakra?”

“It depends on what you heard, unwimble coconut.”

“It is very improper, I gather.”

“So is the very appearance of you, sir. I would not care to express the feelings roused in us all by your prattle. As to the Linga Puja, the Yoni Puja, the Argha Puja, the Bhaja Puja, and other ceremonies to which you apparently refer, go and see for yourself.

¹ Alias Calomel. But that is another story. His real name was Gimlet.

It would do you as much good as this excellent mantra which I recommend to you. 'Mansa, Matsya, Madya, Maithuna, Mudra.'"¹

Gimlet turned round twice and paced the room, rolling in his superb mind a new poem that should vindicate him and annihilate the insolence of his master. This was the only kind of revenge he could think of, and it was usually thunderously efficient.

He had, however, an excuse—his youth, and, because of it, we bore with him while he bored us. Elphénor caught up our common thought, and exclaimed:

"Ah! Youth, youth!"

This reminded him of a tale, and he began abruptly, while we seated ourselves comfortably around his log-fire, drinking some excellent tea.

"I have also been young in the spirit—once upon a time," he remarked.

I was then eating a new delicacy of the Master's invention: "Bâtons de bœuf sèchés au citron." Maman Stamboul was there, pouring the fragrant tea in the thin egg-shaped cups, and smiling serenely upon us all. Dear Maman Stamboul, fresh, plump, and rather pretty, who had earned her nickname through being a sort of Turkish delight to our Brothers! Oh, the jolly Brotherhood we were at the time!

"Yes, I also was young. I could discourse for hours at a stretch upon the inner meaning of the mantra 'Aum Mane Padmi Houm!' Aum! The Jewel in the Lotus! Did it refer to the birth of Padnipami? Was it an allusion to the Linga and the Yoni? One said the first, then

¹ The fivefold Makara. See the 'Syama Rahasya.'

I said it was the second. Another took up my side, and I opposed him. I wasted my time beautifully. To-day I care not for such games. I am the seat of Neit, hidden in the hidden, concealed in the concealed, shut up in the shut up, unknown; I am knowledge.

“Many years ago I was foolish enough to fall in love with a fiery Glascae girl who lived but a few yards from the house wherein I dwelt. She must have been a reincarnation of some priestess of Neit the Perfect, of Neit the Lady of Saïs, Neit the Great, the Divine Mother, Queen of Heaven, Eye of the Sun. And she must have been a very unworthy Priestess, else she would not have been reborn a Scottish lass. Well, her jam-making uncle did not approve of me, and I had therefore to devise some means of reaching the room of my beloved, unperceived by the sticky old man. I could not abide by his prohibition. That never was in my nature. I had already the excellent habit of attempting everything under the sun, of trying all paths and all byways before deciding on their value. That is where our friend Gimlet proves himself a fool, if he only knew it. When this young conceited hero stops concentrating upon a mirror wherein is enthroned an image of himself, and when he tries another road for a change—a few months of devotion to Maha-Kali (may she sit for ever on the sacred Padma!), for instance, Gimlet will prove himself a man of considerable talent. His misfortune is the same that once afflicted me: he lacks balance, and forgets that there is in the Tarot such a card as *The Wheel of Life*. His error lies in his disdaining Maha-Kali (may the Holy One

forgive him!). Mine consisted in a lack of sufficient love for Hermanubis, and I learned a fierce lesson."

"No doubt, but there is only one Elphénor. He had to pay more because he is more. But go on, tell us about your Scotch girl. I do not care for these digressions in Arabic."

Thus our dear Maman Stamboul. Elphénor found his grand manner, as a true Latin. He rose.

"Dear lady, forgive them and me. We were wrong. We shall not engage in Arabic digressions."

"But it wasn't Arabic," sighed the impossible Probationer. "It was Hindu!"

We were at the time under a vow neither to laugh, sneeze, nor cry, and we could but smile. We therefore smiled, and the Master sat down.

"Maman Stamboul," he said, "I did for Jess, the Scottish lass, what I to-day could do for no one, your own sweet motherly self excepted. I digged a tunnel, two feet high, three feet wide, from under the old trunk of a tree in my garden, right into a thick wild bush in hers. It took me twenty-nine days to complete it, and thus be able to effect my entry into Jess's bedroom at any time without being perceived by her uncle."

"How exciting!" I said. "How many times did you make use of the tunnel?"

"Only once! Jess had forgotten all about me before the twenty-nine days were over. She was very indignant when she saw me for the first time emerging from the tunnel, my dress more or less muddy and my head very dirty. I had to regain my house in

a great hurry. However, I see that you are all disappointed, and can perceive but the more obvious of the two morals to be deduced from this yarn, and I will now tell you the history of Ishtar, the Great Susian Goddess of Love and War, the wife of Tammuz.

“ Her city was the town of Erech, once ruled over by Gilgames, and unto him she declared a passionate love. But he, knowing but too well her personal character, rebuked the divine Queen. He sang strange litanies indeed, supported by his friend Enki-du, and in the presence of his officers and of the very priests of her cult, of her whom they called Ama-nuanna:

‘ How didst thou treat thine own husband, O beautiful lady?

And thy lovers, O thick-nostriled goddess?

Where have they gone, all of them, lustrous-eyed queen?

Where is Tammuz,

To whom thou hast caused bitter weeping from year to year?

Where is the bright coloured Allala bird,

Whom thou hast smitten and whose wings thou hast broken?

Where is the Lion perfect in strength,

In whom thou didst cut wounds by seven?

Where is the horse glorious in war,

To whom thou didst cause great hardship and painful distress,

And to his mother Silili bitter weeping?

Where is the shepherd, who provided for thee things of thy liking,

Whom thou hast changed into a puny jackal?
Where is thy father's gardener, Isullanu,
Whom thou didst attempt to poison, and whom
Thou hast finally changed into a badly-carved block
of granite?

O most desirable and terrible divinity, who am I, that
I should pretend to thy love?

Who am I that I could satisfy thy eternal desires?'

"You well understand, Māman Stamboul, and you all, Brethren, that Ishtar felt a growing anger at the mad discourse of Gilgames. She folded herself tightly in her garments and veils, hiding her disdained charms, and ascended to the Vault of Heaven, claiming the vengeance of her father Anu (may he be comforted in his children!) and of her mother Anatu (may the sweetest perfumes delight her nostrils!).

"O daring Gilgames! The parents of the pride-wounded goddess sent forth a divine Bull against the ruler of Erech and against his friend Enki-du. Here is another happy ending for you! The Bull had no power against them, for Ishtar had heard no false reproach from Gilgames. The Bull was killed in square fight, his two horns on the one side, the two friends on the other. Moreover Enki-du, the impudent wretch, seized the part of the dead animal which was consecrated to Shu and the Erect Hermes, and threw it at the goddess. He threatened to injure the Immortal and to rob her of her Sacred Comb should she dare come within catching distance.

"But goddesses are like the birds, and you have to

place a few grains of salt on the train of their Court dress ere you can lay hands upon them. Ishtar gave up the fight and disdained the insult. Gathering her pleasure-women and her consecrated harlots, she departed, weeping nevertheless over the portion of the divine Bull which had been thrown at her."

"I fail to see any point in this," exclaimed the impossible Probationer.

Of course, he could see no point in anything that did not emerge from his own centre. Such tales are only meant to be understood by real sons of Telema who, by definition, must need have a keen and special sense of humour.

As to rich Gimlet, he may turn out a trump. Or he may share the fate of that old friend of mine, who went mad after some years of decent work. I discovered him, one afternoon, playing golf with his gazing-crystal and a magical sword, the holes being the mouthpiece of his portable telephone, a large incense bowl and an empty stout-bottle.

The mercy of God be with us all!

But this is not yet the tale promised. It is terrible for me, when I have to tear myself away from the sweetness of long diversions. You call it lack of concentration, and the name I give it is Deep Purpose. We should never agree. Not any more than I did when our dear Brother Wenbury denied that there was any occult moral in the following tale, which I had from Elphénor Pistouillat himself. Here goes—and War be within you as in me, between impulses

and self-control. In a few hundred years we shall all be dead. At least, *you* mayn't. I shall.

Three men were sitting in the three corners of a third floor room. Outside the spring had made itself felt through its manifestations and the sun sent forth its rays with a lavish extravagance; living exhalations were passing above and around the house—the breath of nature.

But the room was not in touch with the outside world: a windowless attic-like recess cut out from a large square apartment by a wooden partition extending from one angle to the opposite one in diagonal line, and in the middle of which had been opened a small door, hidden in the darker part by the thick crimson art serge which hung all round from the high ceiling down to the floor, covered also with a carpet of the same shade. The other room thus provided was somewhat bigger, (owing to the lack of space which compels the modern architect to work without respect for regularity), received light from a large window, and had been simply but pleasantly, and above all, comfortably, furnished. It belonged, with the house itself, to a young literary man named Malcolm Graves, who was now busily engaged behind the partition with two men, discussing the difficulties which stood in his path.

Malcolm Graves was an amateur; amateur throughout: in the forming of acquaintances, in his methods of work, in the amount he spent in order to get known

by his fellow countrymen, in his way of facing life; he was even more so when handling that key of all things hidden to the sons of Eve, and which requires their work in order to yield its secret: Magic. Graves treated it as a miniature rifle-range for urchins. The room, shaped as an equilateral triangle, had quaint designs in many colours pinned on two sides of the serge-covered walls, diminutive statues in uncanny attitudes placed on the bamboo altar which occupied the centre, and on the third side six huge talismans designed by the occupant of the room after some characters which the good abbé Constant¹ describes in one of his volumes.

An odd contrast was apparent between the physical aspect of young Graves and his amateurish idea of life. He was too young yet for his mentality and morality—or immorality—to have imprinted their brand on his face. A man in real earnest, whom any one would expect to see in disturbed periods crowned with the aureole of a martyr—thus had we—we who know what possibilities were latent in him—labelled him long ago, in the burning expectancy of his doing something rash, striking, violent, and utterly personal. One by one we had come to the conclusion that these latent possibilities were either non-existent or deliberately banished from his thoughts, relegated to the thickest part of his bumpy head and cast away from his memory. There was no dream of noble deeds

¹ *Eliphas Lévi*, a French professor and popularizer of Magic, who lived during the middle of the last century and was partially reborn to this world some thirty years ago—in England.

behind his dreamy eyes, no decisiveness behind his resolute brow, no real energy behind his energetic and edge-cut lips. His appearance was deceitful, to no one so much as it was to himself. Yet, he could have done much and some of his writings denoted an impulsive, perhaps irresponsible, certainly remarkable, genius.

Even if a book on Magic and Occultism had not one day tantalized him when he lacked the means of purchasing even a penny sandwich in the Charing Cross Road, Malcolm Graves would have remained what the French call a *raté*. But the book caught his attention; he perused it, felt attracted by the reproductions of some ancient "Tarots," and, as he could not buy it, he stayed there a long while, reading.

When he got some money he bought the book. He ordered many more on the same subject, and by the time his old aunt had died, Graves had a fine library of occult and magical books in the house she had left him.

But his past life is of no immediate interest to us. The present moment sees him discussing with his friends the life that awaits him, and the prospects are not bright.

"What's the use my being the most wicked man on earth?" Graves said, looking towards the elder of his guests. The man he addressed remained silent, but the younger laughed.

"You are not that, old man!"

"Oh yes! I know. Things that your very imagination refuses to register, I have thought about, will-

ingly and joyfully. You can't realize what delights I took in the mere idea of some highly criminal action, depicting to myself every one in turn of my relatives, of my parents, as the holy lamb of some damnable black mass. Things which no man could achieve, I have done—at least, in my severely controlled speculations."

"What's your drug?" asked the man who had not spoken yet. His tone was not the tone of question, but rather of affirmation, expressing the conviction that there *was* a drug.

"Holy water!" Malcolm answered, with a faint smile. He felt proud of himself, when his friend looked at him in amazement. "Holy water," he repeated. "I fill up this little bottle, day by day, out of a church's basin for my intoxicating purposes. Didn't I tell you I was the most wicked man on earth?"

Alcan Corbett had known Graves for some months now, and to-day he had brought with him a man who knew more seriously and deeply than any one of his acquaintances what real occultism was and what it meant to the adept. Corbett himself had no inclination towards magic and the serious and utter devotion it requires from the initiated, but he had studied the Great Art, and was keen on finding out how much Graves knew of it and whether or not he was sincere. The adept had soon come to the realization of the truth on that point—and he meant to keep it for himself. It was too sad to be imparted.

Malcolm was surprised not to see any indignant expression on the face of the adept, whom Alcan had

introduced by the name of Benson. Malcolm liked to startle people, to shock them. Benson read his thought and spoke gently.

"I guessed it would be some infernal drug of that kind, Mr. Graves. Why do you play with fire?"

"Do I?"

"Certainly. I see you possess a Tarot.¹ Did it not tell you as much?"

Malcolm looked queerly into the eyes of Benson.

"Yes," he answered. "I consult my Tarot. But it speaks not of fire to me. The cards 12 and 13 welcome me."

"I see but one card over you, and its number is 16!"

"I have no fear."

He spoke with a little trembling of the voice. There was fear in him. The adept was a match for him, he felt, and he did not like to be seen through. Relief came when the servant discreetly scratched the door—as she had orders to do when the master sat in his *temple*.

"A lady to see you, sir."

¹ The "Tarot" or Tarocs consists of seventy-eight cards, divided into major (22) and minor (56) arcana. It has been known ever since the time of the ancient Egyptians, and is still used by clairvoyants, though magicians and occultists attribute to it higher mysterious powers, and consult it more as astrologists than otherwise. It is a complete hieroglyphical book. The cards 12 and 13 indicate "Sacrifice" and "Death followed by Reincarnation." The card 16 has sometimes the meaning of "catastrophe" and is called "The House of God."

The designs in this tale are due to Miss K. Reeves, suggested by, and, from an occult point of view, corrected from, the pack of cards of "Papus."

The voice came from outside. Servants were not allowed in.

"We'd better go," suggested Alcan Corbett.

"Oh no! please stay. Mr. Benson and you are most welcome. Excuse me for an instant; I shall return. I know what it is. Show your friend my pictures, will you?"

And he went down, his mind being not a little disturbed, as he remembered the subject of the coming interview.

A young lady rose when he entered the drawing-room.

"Mr. Graves," she spoke quickly and nervously; "thank you for receiving me. I knew Alcan was with you, and I thought he would not know that I had come here. You said yesterday that you would do anything for me. I have one favour to ask you."

"My dear Miss Stapley, I meant it. But won't you sit down?"

"Thank you," she said, "I mustn't stay. I came to ask you to promise me something."

"'Tis granted."

She did not smile, but went on. Her purpose was far too serious for her to smile.

"I want you to break with Alcan."

"What!"

"You must," she said firmly. "You know he is going to marry me?"

"Yes! I know."

"Well, you must not see him after our marriage. I fear for him. I want him to be a man. Mr. Graves, he is not like you; don't keep him in the path he is

now taking. It would be bad for him and . . . I . . . should suffer too much."

"You ask not a little of me. Do you mean that I have a bad influence over Alcan?"

"Not *bad* . . . bad for him."

"I see. What if I cannot promise?"

"You know the truth about us, Mr. Graves. You know why he marries me. I am his; I shall soon be a mother. Well, if you refuse, Alcan shall not be my husband. I'd rather do away with myself."

"Leave these desperate things to me, Miss Stapley! I admire you very much and . . ."

"And . . .?"

"And I promise you."

"Thank you. I will now leave you. Perhaps, one day, soon, I may be able to free you from this promise."

"It will be too late, I am afraid. But I admire your energy. I wish I had met you earlier—in my life—or some one like you."

"Your time will come. You will find plenty other friends. I have only one Alcan! Now I must leave you."

"Miss Stapley, you have my best wishes!"

"And you mine! With my deep gratitude for the sad task you have undertaken. Good-bye."

"Why sad?"

"Because it must be painful to you to lose a friend, when you . . . when you have so few."

"My dear young lady, I pray you not to pity me. Alcan will be the loser."

With this slight sarcasm he bowed, and Miss Stapley left his drawing-room.

Having seen her off, he went up to Corbett and the adept who were carefully conversing on neutral subjects.

"I say," exclaimed the former, as Malcolm Graves entered the *temple*. "I never dreamed you'd be such a time. I must be off, you know. Been flirting, eh!"

"Idiot!"

"Well, well, don't be cross. You might do worse, you know. I understand Mr. Benson wants to ask you some particulars as to one of those weird things in this portfolio. I leave you in his hands. By-bye!"

"I shall certainly enjoy Mr. Benson's company better than yours."

"Ditto, man, ditto!" But Alcan Corbett was in a happy mood and Graves saw that not in that way could he fulfil his promise.

"If I may suggest an idea," put in the adept, "I will say that no man should ever belittle any company, unaware as we are of what company we shall form a part to-morrow."

"How so?" Corbett asked.

"When we come to life again, I mean."

"Oh, I see. Well, it is not a cheerful speculation. I leave you both to discuss it together. By the way, Graves, will you come to witness my marriage at the registrar's next week?"

"No thanks, Corbett. I am sorry, but I must leave London to-morrow."

"Oh!"

Alcan was vexed and surprised, but he said nothing; and, having shaken hands with Benson, left the *temple*.

II

WHEN he found himself alone with Benson, Malcolm Graves looked inquiringly at the adept and waited. His intellect was quick enough to perceive the masterful ways of his interlocutor, and that he was to face some unforeseen ordeal. He took the bull by the horns, not bravely, but as an inexperienced picador, who sees in that daring attempt a better chance than in flight.

"I presume, Mr. . . . er . . . Benson, that we can find something more important to discuss than the contents of a very ordinary portfolio. You seem to know more than I do . . . to take the polite interpretation of your last words to me, before I left this room."

"I *do* know more, Mr. Graves; though I am a great ignoramus, I could tell you much."

"Well, I don't want to hear it. You see, I know my past and my present, and if it is of the future that you speak, I have read it in these cards."

He took from the little bamboo table a silver case with the cards of the Tarot. The adept stretched forth his hand and received the pack.

"Very well, let us trust the great book of truth. Surely you have no objection to my reading it for you?"

"Oh no! I am sure you have studied the Tarot

more than I, and I am anxious to know whether our results will prove consistent. As a matter of fact, I don't quite know the various combinations, nor the meaning of all meetings and encounters of the arcana, and this lack of thoroughness hampers me."

The adept was already starting, mixing the cards carefully and turning some of them upside down haphazard.

Quickly caught as he was by the power of mystery, which had, from the beginning, impelled him towards magical practices, Malcolm Graves cut the cards with his left hand, then waited. He had at that moment the most absolute faith in whatever oracle was to be given him. He watched, and when the first selection by elimination had brought together on the table five hidden cards his heart started beating wildly, his eyes, swollen, were fixed on the point where his fortune—his fate—would be written as soon as the five hieroglyphics should be shown the light. . . .

One by one, the cards were turned out by the adept, who glanced at them in silence, while breathing slowly and alternatively through his nostrils.

Graves knew the individual meaning of these five hieroglyphics, but their association, their encounter, conveyed, as he had acknowledged, a much more complex meaning. He was about to put forth his version, when, suddenly and violently, the adept spread his hands over the cards.

"There is no need for your hiding them," Malcolm exclaimed, "they tell only what any one may know. I am going to die soon."



DEATH



THE SUN



**THE HOUSE
OF GOD**



THE JUGGLER



THE FOOL

His tone was faintly sad. Death he welcomed—but life had still charms for him. The other man had removed his hands and turned his eye towards a second pack of five cards. Malcolm's words had had no effect on him; he inspected them, looked at them with eyes that perceived every particular; and at length he spoke.

"Mr. Graves, I am sorry not to have either the right or the power to hide these arcana from you. You have seen the first answer, and seem to understand it: your death will be the violent end of suicides, followed, as is the rule in similar cases, by an almost immediate reincarnation. I have seen the second pack, and as to the third one—there is no need for me to consult it. The cards may be hidden, yet I know them. They refer to myself. But enough! I prefer not to let you into this secret, which you will, alas, understand soon enough. I know how utterly useless would be my advice, and that my words are spoken too late. We shall meet again, and by that time I hope to master Fate and the spirits invisible. I must now leave you."

"But, one moment, please," exclaimed the young man. "You are most interesting! Do you think that I am a man to be frightened right away with a story of future meeting and reincarnation?"

"It is of no consequence whether you believe or not. It *shall* happen!"

"Maybe; yet I doubt it. What I want to say is this: knowing the future, will you make a bargain with me?"

"Speak out!"

"Will you watch that part of my soul which will be almost at once reincarnated, and see what sort of a creature I turn into, watch the child in which my soul will dwell—if it is a child and not a beast—and when it is old enough, tell him who I was?"

"I will answer you to-morrow," said the adept, and he left the room without a word.

III

THE darkness of the night which had followed that interview was slowly clearing; it was now just the time when a faithful Moslem can distinguish a white hair from a black one, and in consequence resume the prescribed fast. Fully dressed on his bed, Malcolm Graves lay quite still with his eyes fixed on the ceiling. He had stayed in his study later than usual, writing, and clearing away a big wooden box full of papers, and as he did not feel in the least sleepy he had filled up a small glass with the contents of a dark bottle and drunk it. The drug was somewhat more powerful than that which he had earlier in the day boasted of to his guests, for he had scarcely time to enter his bedroom and throw a rug over himself, without undressing. Now, as the dawn appeared, Malcolm awoke, feeling that an enemy, or some opposing force of nature, had during his sleep smitten him; and he tried to trace back the dream. Had he been beaten, destroyed, repelled? It could not be, so calm and quiet had been his awakening. The memory returned gradually. Yes, that was it, the latter part of his dream had been a happy vision. He had been hit, but he had hit back. And he had felt young, so young—so very much younger than he ever remembered to have been—and so strong!

He got up and changed his clothes; the lassitude which he felt coming was quickly stopped with another drug, and he sat down to a hasty breakfast, after which he resumed his writing of the previous day.

He wrote all the morning, ate some biscuits in his study, without leaving his work, and drank at a draught a cup of strong cold coffee. At 2 p.m. he went up to his *temple*, and tried his hand at some Tarot reading; he wanted to know the decision of the Theurge. "It's pride, Pride, PRIDE!" he murmured. "I die because of It; that man Benson will accept because of It; as would the whole beastly gang of human beings. He may know more, but he is human and he'll accept."

Graves lifted his eyes and looked at a gilded card-board text on the wall:

"Vel sanctum invenit, vel sanctum facit."

"Pshaw! Magic may make its adepts holy and deific! But they damn well remain human!"

At 2.30 the adept entered the room.

The two men stood in silence, the adept scrutinizing Malcolm's brow; the latter, with his arms akimbo, was gazing upon an empty space over the head of his visitor. Some time elapsed before his desire to know and his impatience caused him to speak.

"Glad to see you."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Graves. Do you mind if I delay the answer which I see you are expecting until a more propitious time of the day?"

"Please yourself, Mr. . . . er . . . Benson."

"You are right. I have another name. Some

people know me by the name of Tlas Soberec. But you may accept the one of Benson. I have a right to it."

"Have you decided?"

"I have."

"Which is it to be?"

The elder man looked at his watch.

"It is 'Yes,' Mr. Graves. I may be undertaking some task too hard for my strength, but I shall work hard, hard, and secure new powers over the elemental spirits, by whose help I can alter the future of our coming relationship."

"I see you don't take into account the possibility of my retaining during my next physical incarnation the memory of this present life, nor the chance of my becoming an adept, endowed with a power which may hold yours in check."

"Young man, the power of a magician can never be opposed to the power of another! We all serve one Master, whether we are willing to do so or whether we rebel. His Will be accomplished—as It shall be! I am ready to accept your offer. But let me warn you again; and if there is any possibility of your altering your decision . . ."

"There isn't!"

"Very well! Good-bye. We shall meet again. I shall watch, and there is no need for you to inform me of any change in your life. I shall know."

"You promise to take my re-incarnated spirit under your charge, and to let the new being know who I was and what is in this?"

He pointed to a pile of manuscripts on his table.

"They are ready for the printers," Malcolm went on.

"I promise."

The adept stood now near the door. He threw a glance of infinite sorrow upon the young man.

"Have mercy on your own soul!" he cried. But there was no trace of emotion in Malcolm's face, and without another word the adept withdrew, never to see the living Graves again.

A few days later Alcan Corbett received a very formal letter from Malcolm Graves, who "regretted not to be able to witness his marriage," and concluded by announcing his departure for Paris. Miss Stapley, to whom the note was shown, did her best to persuade her *fiancé* that it was to be taken as a happy omen. Alcan could not understand the attitude of his friend. He questioned Benson, who said he could throw no light upon the matter. Alcan wrote; but his letter was returned, no address having been left, and when he went to the house of Malcolm there was no sign of its being inhabited. The preparation of his home, the change in his life, the few weeks that followed his marriage, conspired with his wife to divert his thoughts towards happy prospects, and when they heard of the end, the young wife was then expecting her baby: birth outshone death.

Graves had not gone to Paris. His presence was necessary in London. A boarding-house in Bloomsbury sheltered him under another name, and from

night to morning he corrected the proofs of his books. When, one afternoon, the sixteen volumes which formed his complete works were poured upon the reviewers, and they heard at the same time of his death—sudden and self-inflicted with the aid of a powerful and almost unknown poison which struck him lifeless in the reading-room of the British Museum, they perused hurriedly, and amazed at the wonderful, though certainly more than half unconscious, genius of the dead author, they sent to their editors reviews which were to tell the world what had been lost by the death of Malcolm Graves. His set purpose seemed to have given him the impulse which he needed in order to give the best of himself. Novels, Essays, Philosophy, Poetry, his work embraced every work of Art. It was gigantic, and recalled the names of Athens' and Rome's greatest poets. The fact, which was evident, that he had been inspired by some light of which he was unaware made the event all the more striking.

Why had that man taken his life? He was rich, he had no troubles of any kind. The world asked . . . and the world obtained no answer. A great artist had lived unknown, had died at the age of Keats, and no human reason could explain it all. Then some horrid crime was committed in London, and the interest of the world was attracted by a new subject. The literary circles alone remembered: Puritans objected to some of his works, and the memory of Malcolm Graves was crowned with roses and banned from the public libraries, awaiting the verdict of posterity.

IV

AN incarnate spirit was awakening within the simple shape of a human chrysalis. It felt that something unknown—and yet part of itself—was making an attempt at freedom, that it was trying to escape, that it could not do so without breaking. The life it was now leading seemed sufficiently comfortable and happy to the semi-conscious spirit and it had no idea of what we call Death. It only knew that some change was approaching, that its actual life was near its end. Physical struggle could but hasten that end, yet the chrysalis tried it. A strange feeling of emptiness, a consciousness of some fathomless abyss whereinto it was falling—an ultimate sigh changed into the first cry of another life—a sudden hatching, the feeling of life infinitely increased—the chrysalis is dead, long life to the new human being!

The medical man who attended on Mrs. Corbett showed himself careful not to give any hopeless answer to her anxious husband; but he knew too well that she would not leave her bed alive. Her child, a delicate little girl, was brought up to the mother some three weeks after the birth, and for the first time Alcan's wife felt her pain comparatively light, and was able to

study more closely the little human being for which she had suffered.

The mother looked at her child; the child looked at her mother. All of a sudden, in the infant's eyes, the mother saw a light which flashed through her heart. This little face, with scarcely any thought expressed on it, called to Mrs. Corbett's memory another face, the face of a man she had known, against whom she had to fight for her own happiness, for the happiness of her husband. She thought her child was addressing her, and in those little eyes she read the same sarcasm. "I have come! I have come! Why did you forbid me this house? I have come!"

Alcan's wife was sobbing and the child still stared at her without a smile, without a change in the set expression of her little face. The wife and mother was too weak to attempt a fight. She lifted her arms as if to take hold of the child, to shake the challenge out of it, to destroy that life which stood between her own and happiness. The effort was too much for her. She fell back on the bed and shut her eyes. The nurse ran to her; too late. A tiny baby was the lady of the house.

Her first visitor was Benson. He arrived a few hours after the death of Mrs. Corbett and found the husband a prey to mad sorrow, cursing the Powers that rule the world. He expressed no surprise at the arrival of the adept and let his hand be pressed without a word. But as Benson attempted to comfort him, he lifted his eyes and addressed him.

"Could you not have caused that my wife should not have died?"

"I cannot awake her from her sleep, my friend; nor does your wife's spirit wish for life. She has loved and fought for happiness and has deserved to die. I have seen her since she left this bed of sickness and . . ."

"You lie! I do not believe a word of your blasphemy! Why do you come and insult me?"

"You do not believe, do you?" returned the visitor. His tone was gentle, and Corbett in his pain could not but see that the man was in sympathy with him.

"Give me my wife back; and I will believe!" he said, ready to grasp hope in whatever form it passed by. "Except I see her and speak to her and hear her voice and receive a kiss from her lips I will have no faith, but shall curse your useless science and its blind followers."

Benson was standing silent, buried in a vision. The silence grew very still and the two men were as motionless as the woman under the sheet. The adept was very pale when he spoke.

"And if I did what you ask, would you believe? And if she speaks to you, will you be silent? And if she orders, will you obey?"

The queries were so solemn that Corbett did not answer at once, but let a few moments pass. His hesitation however did not last, and firmly, fearlessly, his eyes fixed on the eyes of the adept, he said:

"I would!"

"And I trust you will! Your wife is dead, man, yet shall she live, and speak, and command!"

Corbett was deadly pale. A secret voice within him was loudly denying the power of this man, the possibility of such a miracle. His love, his will, prevented the voice from getting a fair hearing. He knew it was mad to believe that his dead wife could come to life again. He stepped to the bed and pulled the sheet. There were deep creases upon the body, and the face alone gave an idea of peaceful rest. He kissed his wife's eyes and called to Benson.

"Look at her!" he cried. "Can you give her back to me? Can you make her lips kiss my lips; can you warm them? Ah! man, man, don't lie to me! If she could return, my embrace would have called her back!"

And he clasped the corpse in his arms, pacing the room with it, holding it so tightly that his bones cracked. The adept gently helped him to replace the body of his wife on the bed.

"Go to your child," he then said to Corbett. It was the first time the child was mentioned between them, "Go to her, and see that she is taken away from this house for awhile. When she has gone return to me."

"Will you give my wife back to me?"

"I have not the power to do that, but I may succeed in persuading her to forget her present happiness and come to you for a short instant."

"What are you saying? what happiness? She loved me, I tell you!"

"Oh, yes! But she has *since* then passed from humanity. There is no death; but there is transformation, progress. She lives in a higher sphere. If I am able to find a suitable chain of attraction which can fix her to this lifeless body, your wife will speak to you. I am aware that your child is an obstacle to a possible resurrection. Send her away for awhile; I will remain in this room."

Alcan was in a state bordering on that strange feeling known to men as insanity. He doubted and at the same time he had faith. He told the nurse to take the child out, and refusing to let anyone follow him, returned to the death chamber.

The magician—that man whom Alcan had heard give himself the name of Tlas Soberec—was awaiting his return. Sitting by the bed, he was praying. When the husband entered, he bade him stand at his left and concentrate the working of his brain upon the coming operation. He then suddenly took hold of the corpse's hand and lifted it, while calling her in firm and strong accents.

The colour came to her cheeks, her lips reddened, she lifted her eyes, slowly, with an effort. On her pure face the adept could follow the stages of her awakening. Alcan was too struck to have any thought. He fell on his knees, awaiting a tender word, a gesture, a glance of recognition. But she was sitting on the bed, her eyes were now fixed upon his, and she did not even seem to notice the tears rolling down from his eyes.

She looked with the same stern, cold look, as would a statue of ice suddenly called to life. How could it be? That woman whom he had loved, who had—he was sure of it—loved him so dearly that she had even made for him the highest sacrifice a woman can make for a man, who had trusted him to the utmost and given herself to him before their marriage—there was now not the slightest expression of love on her face. She gave him no sign.

And the silence, the absence of even the slightest sound, was too much for the lover.

“Darling, darling, I cannot bear it,” he said. “Why do you not speak to me? You have come back to me, why do you not smile? Is there no love left in your heart? Answer me, speak to me! Don’t you see that I am growing mad?”

Benson was standing quite still, watching intently. He suddenly jumped forward. The woman’s lips were parting.

“What do you,” she was saying, “want from me?” Her voice was no more than a whisper, but in the room it sounded like some terrible clamour. “I was so happy, resting . . . resting! Let me go; I hate being here.” Her eyes were now distorted. “Let me go! Oh! the tragedies that hang over you all! Let me go!”

The Master approached. He took no notice of Alcan’s entreaties, and gently pushed back the woman. The expression on her face changed once more. She put her hands to her heart, uttered a terrified cry, and the instant after lay lifeless once more. . . .

They had to carry her husband away. From that day his life was broken, his body a mere shadow. The sight of his child seemed to plunge him into a wild and furious state. Benson took charge of the little girl, and, when her father died, she had been already to all intents and purposes an orphan.

V

THE child grew up in the country,¹ brought up by some friends of Benson, until she reached her tenth year. Little need be said of this early period of her life. She was a pretty little girl, healthy and mischievous, and, being indulged in all her desires, she seldom showed any signs of a latent temper.

At ten she went abroad, and was given a thorough education. The time she spent at school left a strong impression on her girl friends.

She was entering on her fifteenth year when Benson, whom she had always considered her only relation in the world, took her for a long trip through Europe. She enjoyed it in spite of his attitude. He appeared to her an extraordinary old man. The Magician had aged, and the burden of his responsibility was heavy upon him. He would keep his word, but he knew that by so doing he was slowly preparing his doom. And he did not know how to deal with the young girl who seemed so sharply clever, and whose eyes wide open reminded him ceaselessly that there was some unspeakable mystery behind them. He thought

¹ The author begs to apologize for a change of key which he considered necessary in the course of this chapter—the passing from the magical to the human interest. But this also is Music.

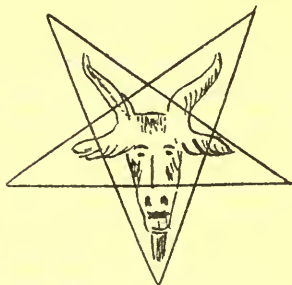
at times she herself knew of the Past, that she knew what he had promised, what he was to tell her, and the faint smile she always had for him he took as an uncanny consciousness of her coming victory.

No words were uttered between them touching the revelation which lay ahead. He had given up prying into the Future; he no longer studied his Art; he ceased to exert his powers over the Elemental. Finally, a patient resignation was expressed in all his thoughts. The Adept had become a Fatalist.

And slowly, lentously, a new sentiment to which he had hitherto carefully avoided giving way, spread over his spirits its infrangible web. Iris Corbett inspired him with a holy horror, but he was attracted by that horror; he loved it, and the sentiments he felt towards her could easily reduce themselves into unity, into the unity of Love. Strange desires came over him, the temptation of a long-repressed manhood, the savage instincts of early humanity, the wild attraction of an unholy passion. He tried at first antidotes which his books gave as certain. He wore a topaz ring on his left hand. But the stone of which Albert the Great says that, set in heavy gold, it dispels folly and gives wisdom, helps to chastity, puts to flight all phantoms, and altogether renders man "*moult sage*"—the chrysolite failed to bring him peace. He loved Iris with all his senses, with his heart, as much as the Magician within him loathed her presence.

He began to fear that the time had come, that the worst was to happen, when—they were then in Italy—he had left on his table a book on the great Art, and

on his return saw her reading it. She showed him a copy she had made of some designs which made him curse himself. From instinct she had drawn them



upside down. Where the Pentagram which expresses the Faith of the Adept was, in the volume, respectfully pointing the Symbol of Unity, she had drawn it head downwards, and in the two points he thought he saw the horns of evil, the sign of sacrilegious duality.

"She is of the devil," he muttered, "or else, led on the mysterious ways of Osiris, she knows more than I do."

She did very likely know more, as young girls are wont to do. But to him what might have been but a fancy appeared an utmost sacrilege. Yet he bowed before Destiny, and placed no obstacles in front of her. By a common assent they returned to England, and, with a suitably passive chaperon, she was left in a charming country cottage by the sea, to live according to her desires and satisfy her sudden curiosity. He allowed her a liberal income, put no restriction upon her, and retired for a year in solitude, in order to seek his former self and prepare for the day when he would have to keep his promise.

She met him in the garden when he returned. She was splendid, he thought, as she stood smiling, her hand stretched out to him. She wore a long full robe of green *crêpe*, the shade of the young ivy leaves in April, and a flowing coat of the colour of the flesh, low, square-necked, bordered with a wide open-worked lace; the sleeves were high-laced, with ribands of the same colour, opening from the elbow downwards; a wide pink satin bow hung low from the waist.

Lilac and pear trees bloomed above her, and her smile to his eyes outshone the grace of nature—a feeling against which he had fought in vain during the past months.

Only when he came nearer did the Magician see

the jewel hanging from the gold chain over her bosom.

"By Serapis!" he exclaimed.

Two triangles were cut, one into the other, their appearance suggesting Fire and Water owing to the tiny rubies and sapphires set in them.



"Well," she said, as if unaware of his emotion, "how do you feel in this bracing part of the world? I am so glad you've come! I have been feeling so lonely of late, and old Mrs. Hubbard is so tiring at times."

In a distracted way he inquired:

"Have you been ill? Why did you not let me know?"

"Ill! Oh, no! But the doctor thought I was, and I have in consequence suffered many things of many physicians, and have spent all that I had, and was nothing bettered and rather grew worse."

She laughed, and the man felt his helplessness. Yet

the sight of her jewel gave him the courage he needed in order to speak his thought.

"Iris, will you tell me where you got that object?"

"Do you like it? I see you don't. I am sure I can't see why. I drew it myself down here, and sent the sketch to a firm of jewellers. I thought it so weird, so uncanny, you know,—like the pictures in those books on Magic which you always carry with you. I have quite a lot of them here; I mean, I bought some. They are mine, you know."

The magician was perplexed. Was she playing a comedy to him? He would know . . . at once.

"Iris," he said, "it is one of the signs of evil."

"How can it be? It's so pretty!"

"I am going to explain this to you . . . presently . . . this evening. . . ."

He stopped short, lest the surprise expressed in her eyes should make him postpone until "to-morrow." He changed the subject, and after a while entered the cottage, into which she followed him.

"I think you are not a bit nice to me after so many months. But I don't mind. I will let you see how clever I have become, and to-night I will show you a pack of Tarot cards which I have made myself. I can tell fortunes now, and by a process which I have found out quite alone."

She was evidently very proud and eager to be able to show this man who had been so kind to her that she was taking interest in matters of which he appeared to think so highly.

But Benson was lost in the most wretched de-

ductions. For a moment he thought that she had gone so far as to worship the devil, as silly superstitious people are wont to do, not knowing that they worship a mere idea—yet an idea which is part of their own nature. It was strange, he thought, to say the least, that she should choose, amongst the enormous number of symbols which enter the Magical doctrines, the very symbols which stand for darkness and sin. How did she know that for the higher adept of Magic the Fire of Heaven is poured upon him like a celestial fountain, and the Water, the earthly waves, spring straight to the Invisible World above. The student, fresh in The Path, was taught another explanation. And that jewel! Was she boldly and foolishly carrying about a sign of evil, a symbol of Typhon, unaware of its meaning, or was she initiated—by god or man, it was all one and the same result—and did she know that Osiris is a dark god and Typhon his twin brother?

Good God! If she knew that, she knew also who she was! To one who knew that secret and rejoiced in it and understood it, there was nothing hidden in the world. She then knew of herself in a previous life, of herself as that strange young man Graves. Oh, he must know! And yet, how could he question her? Iris! Iris! Iris! The beauty of her! The charm of that child! The attraction of her eighteen summers! What eyes she had! And her smile, how maddening to the poor man! This smile and her lips—red, and as truly burning as the Fire of Heaven—was it not too much for his strength? The Magician was near to

losing his self-control. Love, Passion, Desire mastered him. . . .

The evening came. In her little library he was sitting facing her; his knees were trembling. He seemed unaware of his purpose.

He lifted his eyes, and his glance fell upon the books behind her. Books on Magical Science, Poetry, Novels, and there—oh! . . . The Complete Works of Malcolm Graves in sixteen volumes. . . .

"Iris! I had no idea you had these books."

"Did you not? I am afraid I have been very extravagant."

"I don't mean that. But how can these things interest you?"

"The works of Graves! I *do* love to read them. There is nothing I know that appeals so much to me."

She seemed quite enthusiastic; she evidently meant what she was saying. He thought the time had come. . . .

"Iris, do you believe in re-incarnation?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Have your thoughts never been wondering on that subject?"

"Often. . . ."

"Who did you think you were?"

She gave no answer. He felt sure she knew.

"What if I knew?"

"You!" she exclaimed. "But, of course, you know such a lot. If you know, you'll tell me, won't you?"

"Yes, Iris, I will. You are a re-incarnation of Malcolm Graves."

"What!"

He was coming to the end of his trusteeship. He was nothing but a lover now. He wanted to hurry his sentences, to tell the whole story and end with his own confession; and taking no heed of her exclamation, he went on and told her all he knew of Graves, mentioned his promise, her father's marriage, her own birth, her mother's death, and the maddening thoughts which had compelled him to run away from her.

She listened intensely. When he had finished, she came to him and, putting her arms round his neck, kissed his forehead. He seemed overcome with the force of his emotions.

"I am sorry," she said. And as he sat speechless, she repeated, "I am sorry. You have been so good to me. But I cannot believe what you say to me."

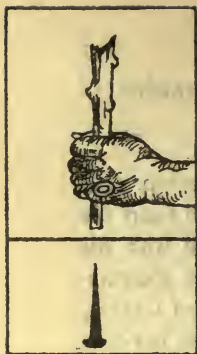
"I love you, Iris," he murmured, looking at her, lost in ecstasy.

"You are my father, you know," she retorted. Her tone was simple and gentle. She tore her jewel from the chain and threw it on the floor. Suddenly the thought of Graves came to her, and she added:

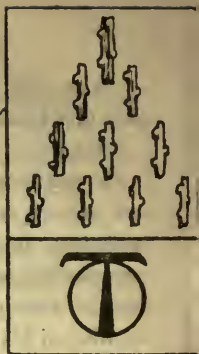
"We must pray for him."

There were tears in her eyes, and the Magician wished that he also could cry. . . .

The evening was close and stormy. He went out into the garden, and she sat at her little table by the



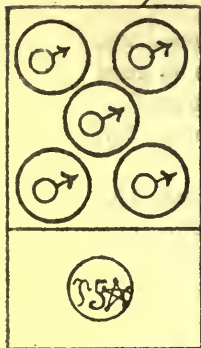
ACE OF WANDS



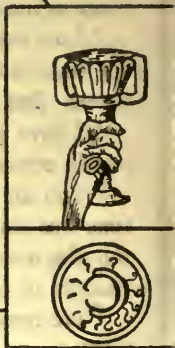
TEN OF WANDS



THE WORLD



FIVE OF COINS



ACE OF CUPS



ACE OF SWORDS

window, watching him. Mechanically she took her pack of Tarot cards and placed six cards in the silver star. She looked at them for a minute and rose suddenly. She thought of the two men she knew. One—her lover—of whom she had yet said nothing; the other—her adopted father—who said he loved her . . . and who knew so much that she was almost afraid of him.

Presently the storm broke. White and blue, red and yellow, gigantic, the forked lightning flashed over the hills. She called his name, but the Magician did not or would not hear. He marched out of the garden and ascended towards the storm. She wanted to run after him, but suddenly she felt that some event was taking place which she could not alter, which she was not to attempt to fight, and she stood silent, pale and sad.

He was going up, up towards the sky. She could see him at intervals. The lightning seemed to play around and above him, like vultures over a battlefield. Suddenly she saw him stop, lift his head. Daringly and gently, swiftly and softly, the point of flame touched him, messenger of Death, bringing the Kiss of Peace, the Light in Extension, to his saddened soul.

Yet he had not moved. She called for help, and they went after him. He was standing straight, his face to the sky, his eyes closed. She touched him lightly on the shoulder, and the human frame that had been fell on the soil—a handful of ashes. . . .

She went down again, feeling the weight of Life upon her. She fell on her knees in her room and addressed fervent prayers to God, not knowing that they were unnecessary.

Then she thought of her lover, and wrote to him the sad end of her father. He hurried to her side and learned that by her guardian's will she had been left a fortune.

She told him everything.

"I do not believe a word of it," he thought, and kissed her. . . .

"It *is* a silly yarn, brother," said Wenbury. "And your Tarot things are all wrong. Show me the cards." Therefore this devil of a tale is illustrated.

BOB

To
George Holbrook Jackson

Sam. R. L. Smith

BOB

After all, what a beautiful thing it is, not to be, but to have been, a genius.—BORROW.

I MET Bob "Pernod" in Paris, early one morning. Never mind why I sat there, at a marble table in the Café d'Harcourt, long after the red-coated Hungarians had ceased playing, and had probably gone to bed, as I myself should have done. I was with a couple, man and wife . . . or so I believe . . . whom my unwelcome absence would have reduced to an inartistic racking of the past, of their misfortunes, and to some unpleasant arguments. I was playing chess with the lady, and winning, shamelessly winning, the price of a fairly high pile of those funny saucers which stand for the same number of emptied glasses and for the amount due for same . . . to use the vulgar style of such vulgar thing as an account rendered.

My male friend was sketching with delight the striking profile of an adorable *rousse*, a newcomer there . . . almost a *débutante*, who sat at a distant table. The ginger girl suddenly caught sight of his sketch-book, and rose in a most unbecoming temper. The high tone of her voice caused all the drinkers to look up.

"Eh, là-bas! t'as pas fini d't'offrir ma tête sur ton sale papier!" and she threw at him a slice of lemon, fished out with two nails in deep mourning, from the bottom of an empty glass.

She missed him. The waiter politely begged "Madame" to sit quietly with her friends—some American boys who enjoyed the fun immensely—and no one seemed to notice what happened subsequently.

Bob "Pernod" it was whom the slice of lemon had struck. He looked up for the space of a second, then, without a gesture of anger, he began to cry silently. Big tears rolled on to the marble, straight from his eyes.

One of his two companions looked bored, the other slightly sympathetic. The first I knew to be the notorious "Mimi-souffle-au-ventre"; the other, a woman also, was old, very faded, having for decades sold herself to men in both hemispheres, having ruined many, yet herself never rich, for she was what they call a "good girl," ready to give, and spiteless. She was old as the world, experienced in the ways thereof, and had a little income, safely prepaid into a bank for her life by a young Bolivian, whom she had amused, and who, on his marriage-day, had felt some scruples as to her future.

She came every day to the café; and she it was who, that night, treated Bob "Pernod" and Mimi to their drinks. Personally unconcerned with the doings of these men and women around her, Blanche, as an ironist had called her years ago, liked the place and took a certain interest in the affairs of everyone among

them. To the girls she gave money, to the men advice, to Bob drinks. There are strange callings in this world of ours. For Bob there was but one, the call of absinthe Pernod—hence his nickname; and to answer it he had allowed himself to become Blanche's protégé. She gave him all he now lived for.

Mimi was there by chance—awaiting a "friend," as the word goes. She spoke first.

"Don't be so silly, Bob! What's the use of crying? Look at me; do you think I haven't got my troubles? You know that boy Louis, he is in the army; well . . ."

I heard the broken voice of Bob, who cut her short.

"Shut up!"

Mimi smiled, unperturbed. The voice then went on, but not addressing her. Bob was speaking to himself. I shall never forget the sound of that voice. It was different from the ordinary drunken voice,—"*voix avinée*," as the French have it. It was weird in the extreme.

He raised two bleary eyes in the direction of the red-haired girl; but the light was too much for him. He bent again, reciting Dowson's haunting poem:

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion!"

Mimi shook hands with Blanche and went to another table, whence came roars of laughter. I turned to my friends and they both understood my mute query. They could not speak, so near him they were. But the answer of their eyes was: "Listen, philosopher, you will be rewarded."

"Mon p'tit Bob, do be quiet!" said Blanche. "Have another glass, if you like, but don't you be silly. I'll take you home, afterwards. I don't want to laugh, but do try to be a bit more cheerful."

"Hah! You are a good sort, Flotsam!" he answered, with an affected smile. His tears were still on the marble. He wiped them with his elbow. "That girl! she's come again, she's after me! Good God! Blanche, I want to kiss her."

"You know Marie is dead, Bob!"

"No. And I don't care. This one is like her. I want to kiss her. I swear I shall. I have been waiting for her."

"This girl is but a kid, Bob, a naughty, violent, and—inexperienced kid," Blanche answered firmly, without seeming to notice the change that had now come over his face. Bob was evidently "waking up." His hands were now stiff; holding his glass up to his lips, he emptied it at a gulp, holding it so tightly that I expected it to break at any moment. But he replaced it without accident, and answered the woman.

"Look here, Flotsam! I don't care a damn for to-morrow; I don't want to know what may become of me, if you leave me to my fate; and I don't care either. I just want that girl, Marie—or whoever she is now. I have been a lost man ever since she went away, and you . . . you've been very good to me. But she's back and—kid or no kid, I am coming back to life too."

My friends and I were watching Blanche. My friend, who respects nothing, whispered in my ear: "Behold

the Lady of Sorrow!" Her face had suddenly been endowed with a quiet, sad, courageous dignity. A sentimental painter would have then felt an impulse to picture her as a mother after the death of her son. For Blanche had come to realize suddenly, in the midst of that extraordinary crowd of young men and women, that her time had passed, that no man would ever replace Bob, her last one. She had been more of a mother to him than a lover. Flotsam of life and love, as he called her—as she was, Blanche was yet a woman; with yet all the instincts of potential motherhood. And Bob was willing to be mothered. There was no love left in him for any but for a dead woman: Marie, whom I imagined to have been some fiery-looking artist of the Quarter.

It was Blanche's turn to cry now, but she contrived to keep her tears back, although we could see what effort it cost her. Shameless in her sorrow, she spoke:

"It's all right, Bob! Do as you must. When you want me, you know where to come. Take this, and . . . good luck!"

I saw her purse pass into his hands. Bob made no response. He gave no sign that he knew what she had said or what she had given him. She looked down on him for a minute, and slowly walked away. Nobody had noticed the scene but my two friends and I.

My friend's wife looked serious, sympathetic; she pitied Blanche. My friend and I, we felt utterly disgusted with the man; yet, perhaps, a trifle sorry for him.

Bob stood up in his turn, as if to leave the table,

opened his hand and looked at the small silver purse he was holding in it. He appeared surprised, then smiled sadly, and finally put it away.

Then he looked in the direction of the red-haired girl, extracted the purse from his pocket and counted the money, gold and silver. He paid for his glasses and walked steadily to the table where the girl was. We saw him hail one of the American students, who silently made room for him. Such is—or rather was, for the times have gone by—the way of the Quarter, although Bob might have been but a very slight acquaintance.

No trace of drunkenness seemed left in him. He was living for a purpose that night; we three felt it. We watched his face, his blighted, blasted face, and we waited. And while we waited, I was made acquainted with the tragedy of a genius that was no more.

Bob Wrexham was an Englishman with a strong tinge of Scotch and Irish blood. Left an orphan early in life, he had been brought up by a brother of his mother, a musician endowed with great artistic feelings. Bob needed little impulse towards art; he modelled in clay, while at school, sketched from nature and played the violin before he was twelve. He had all the makings of a great genius. In Italy one of his masters was heard to call him “a new Leonardo.” But all this is public knowledge. I had, of course, heard of Wrexham. But my friend was one of the few who

knew that Robert Wrexham was "Bob Pernod." Bob himself had forgotten it.

Love had sent him down. From Florence, when they had nothing left to teach him, he had gone to Paris and begun work.

Being an artist born he had always followed the natural impulses of an artist; but his fancies had never lifted him up to the Great Passion. Everything had gone too much his way. By what remained of his physiognomy I could see that he must have been singularly handsome. Women had loved him, and he had loved them, with no incentive results for his art.

One morning, in search of a model, he had met a red-haired girl. My friend told me that she was very beautiful. His wife shrugged her shoulders, as if denying it. The girl must have been accordingly very beautiful indeed, for both reasons. My friend was a painter, and knew a fine girl when he met her; his wife was a woman—and his wife. Enough. The red-haired girl was called Marie; she had been a student, had loved a man, been deserted by him, then by her family. Then she had drifted downwards. Then Bob had met her, and it had been from the first a great and admirable love. He offered to marry her; she had laughed, being wise in the ways of the Quarter, but not knowing Bob sufficiently well.

They were very happy. Bob produced at that time several beautiful works; he was ascending quickly the ladder of fame. All felt that his mature age would bring out masterpieces.

But Marie fell ill. Bob became desperate before any one else—even the medical men—knew what would be the issue of her illness; the tragedy of Edgar Allan Poe revived. He was too nervous, too sensitive, too weak of character, not uncommon attributes of genius. He drank, drank, drank. Absinthe, the “Pernod,” ruined his brains, after the first temporary increase of their power. Marie had probably herself felt his anticipated depression, and may not have cared to fight for her own life. He had lost her, and he drank more. He had lost his talents, lost his self-respect, lost his friends, lost whatever little money he had. He had retained nothing—his craving for absinthe excepted, and that increased to a most unmanly degree. Bob had gone down in a very short time.

His friends had not, or hardly, attempted to help him; they thought it but a passing fancy. My friend even, while he now spoke, refused to believe Bob to be a lost man.

“’Tis but a passing set of clouds over him,” said he, expressing all that is hopeful and undespairable in the spirit of the Quarter.

“Do you mean to say,” I asked, fairly puzzled, “that no one here did earnestly attempt to rouse his spirits? Why, man, it is a crime!”

“Yes, a crime,” echoed my friend’s wife.

My friend only nodded, and grunted “Ah!”

“Do you then deny it?”

“No, no; far from me. But things are much better as they are. Bob was happy, he had no more that horrid unearthly craving for some inexpressible ideal—

the curse of Art. He lived a dull, even self-destroying, life; Blanche helped him, as well as she could."

Before I could answer we were interrupted by the departure of the red-haired girl with Bob and three American boys. It was well for my friend that I did not answer him. He would have heard this: "*You* are not troubled with that craving for an ideal, old man, or you would not turn out such work as you do." But he was a nice man, a reliable friend, and his wife was charming. I took my hat and went out into the Boulevard.

It was very late—or fairly early. The night was cold and windy. I turned up my coat collar, brought down the wings of my soft brown felt hat, and followed the steps of the little band. They stopped outside the "Dôme," and parleyed awhile. I could not see Bob when I came to their level. There was the ginger girl, there were the three American boys whom I had seen with her in the café, but not even the ghost of Bob Pernod. I stepped in.

There he was, sitting at a table next to the billiard room. He took no notice of me. I watched him; I could not help it; I felt that something was going to happen.

Bob had looked steadily in the direction of the door. When the Americans entered, alone, he went out, affecting carelessness. I got up and followed. I saw that, in spite of his affectation, he was trembling—drink, or his new craze. . . .

The girl had walked fast, but hearing footsteps she slackened her pace. Bob came up to her.

"Good evening," he said.

The girl turned round sharply. They were under the searching rays of a lamp-post. I saw his face in the full light. He was very pale, and his eyes were shining like the eyes of a starving wolf.

"What do you want?" she asked. She was frightened by his looks, and felt angry for it. I was very cold, but I hid behind a tree and waited.

"I have come to fetch you," he answered.

She made a movement as if to run away. But he took hold of her hand. I dared not interfere, and I was interested. She evidently did not like his appearance. Finally she shrugged her shoulders.

"Money?" she said.

"Heaps." He did not say more. He could not. He was getting wilder and wilder.

"*Allons!*" she said, assuming a passive attitude. They walked on together.

I waited a few seconds and went to bed.

In the course of that week I left Paris, and not for a month did I return to the Quarter.

Dining with my friend and his wife, I asked them what had become of one and another of our acquaintances.

"And Bob?" said I, suddenly.

My friend's wife answered:

"Bob! My dear fellow, it is the most extraordinary affair I ever heard of. He is married."

“No!”

“Yes! You remember that ginger girl who aimed at us and sent her piece of lemon at Bob? Well, he’s married her.”

“Dear me! Are they happy?”

“Rather! They seem more than happy. She is a beast, but she’ll make something new out of old Bob!”

The ginger girl did make something new out of old Bob. Nothing like the old one; but he is better, drinks no more, and looks fat. And after all, there are stranger happenings in this world of ours—not to speak of the Latin Quarter of Paris.

THE HOG ON THE BEACH

To
Victor Benjamin Neuburg

THE HOG ON THE BEACH

I

THIS is the history of a very foolish girl who lived in a little island all alone, a few centuries ago. She left it and went out into the world. It is neither a moral story, nor a long story, nor a cheerful story, nor a sad story, nor a sane story, nor a true one. Merely the history of a very foolish girl.

Moreover, I have not received it direct from the hero, or the heroine, or the villain, or the last survivor. It was told me by the great Adept Elphénor Pistouillat de la Ratiboisière. Now Elphénor was not only a great Adept in Magical Science; he was also a very great distortionist, *primus inter mendaces*. Seeing that Elphénor was a Frenchman, the mendacity was none too surprising an element of his nature. Yet we cannot blame this tendency of theirs, for they flatter us.

However, the tale was not banal, and as he told it well I thought it worth recording. One afternoon Elphénor was reclining heavily upon his couch, digesting with serpentine difficulties the lunch to which he had been treated by a Probationer of little merit, his canary waistcoat unbuttoned, his mixed purple and rust coloured tie loosened. His host of an hour ago

and guest of the present was listening to the Master's ejaculations, awaiting the pearls that often fell from Elphénor's lips on such occasions.

I was there also and it was my fate to endure the silly talk of a fellow who insisted upon telling me all about himself while I had most interesting things to tell him about my own personality. When Elphénor's voice rose above the snorting and the humming of his own digestive motor, and he sat up and looked at the three of us, I took it for granted that my torment was at an end and that the conversation was to become centred upon the Master. He was addressing the Probationer.

"Snouty baboon, freak of Nature," said the now smiling Elphénor, "you must choose between being a mystic, that is a lonely dreamer of lonely dreams, or an initiate, that is a magus, that is an adept, that is a god among the gods. Give me a cigar, yes, one of *yours* for *me* to smoke. If you understand me and my ways, you are a god. If you try to explain them to yourself in a misty sort of way, you are a mystic. The two words are pretty well akin, too. What we heroes, or supermen, or magicians, or whatever the idiots call us—what we do and think cannot be judged in the manner you suggest. We want to be taken as we are, not as we are supposed to be. If you want to be an adept you must do as adepts do, kill your child and curse the world, the gods, your masters and yourself. Then worship the UNNAMEABLE and love His pretty creatures for His sake. If you prattle about allowances to be made, about *being good* and all that

sort of thing, then stay where you are, in Hell, and be damned to it."

"You misunderstand me, Master," the other answered, as meek as a bath-chair man. "Cannot you see that I am loath to trust myself on the wrong Path, lest I should later on wish to take to another and find it is too late?"

"There is no room for timorous fools with us," Elphénor answered. "Although it has nothing to do with our conversation, let me tell you of another coward, a woman I knew, in the days of my first births.

"You have heard, no doubt, of that old instrument of magic which the folk of the Middle Ages called 'la main de gloire.' Well, she had such a thing in her possession. She was a thorough female, rejoicing in her muliebriety. You understand that I am speaking of a dead woman, dead and, I hope, still buried, although she turned out to be a vampire, and the grave is no prison to vampires, as we all know.

"She was pretty and dreamy—more than pretty, too greatly subject to dreaming, to that peculiar kind of dreaming which we French call *révasser*. She lived with her mother in a pleasant house, one of the quaintest houses ever built on the gravel soil of Charm Island, the Ceylon of the Atlantic. She was young and would have been much courted in a larger place. But she could not satisfy herself that any man would serve her in the capacity of a husband, unless he were a replica of her girlish dreams. She was in love with Prince Charming before he came, in the disguise of a bold sailor and a fine looking man.

"Well, my brothers, fathers of the Red Eagle, there is much to be said in praise of the Prince Charming fiction. In fact, there is but one thing to be said against it, that it does not in any way correspond to reality, that it is an anti-natural idea, an anti-human heresy and a deprecable error. However, we all think of ourselves as so many Princes Charmants, whose very glances are pregnant with infinite possibilities. The sailor bold was an officer of uncertain rank and he lit the fire within her with a conquering look of nautical sympathy.

"I am telling you a not unusual story so far. Have patience."

II

ELPHENOR PISTOUILLAT de la Ratiboisière paused suddenly, being interrupted by the entrance of a terrible bore nicknamed the "Unique." We submitted to the inevitable waste of time which was, is, and shall be, the tiresome result of his tiresome presence. For we had found, after many experiences and gradually stronger doses of mental remedies, that the Unique was not to be avoided, silenced, or rebuked. He was never *de trop* because he never felt himself to be. But, by Poseidon, he was. Also, we were. He was one of those of whom it has been said: "Solitudinem faciunt, victoriam appellant." Unfortunately we could not make the place a desert and leave him there alone. We therefore closed our eyes, and worked a mantra, in and out, up and down, round and round, merely nodding at intervals, in the pretence of listening while the fellow spoke.

After a while Elphénor looked up and addressed me.

"Do not forget that our beloved B. is calling here in a few minutes."

"I really must be going," the Unique said; for he walked and stood in mortal awe of B.'s cynical comments upon the world and its inhabitants. "I really must be going," he repeated, "I cannot stand that man."

"How very strange," Elphénor grinned, "he says exactly the same of you. Your aura does not exactly melt into his."

"Nor do I wish it," the Unique retorted hotly, "his aura is an accumulation of putrid larvae."

Elphénor gave no answer. He merely blinked and took up a book by his side. He marked a passage, then passed the volume to one of us and bade him read.

"My groves of olive were planted by an harlot, and my horses were bred by a thief . . . I have slain all things because I am Innocence . . . I have lain with all things because I am Untouched Virginity . . . I have given birth to all things because I am Death . . . I am the Father of all Wickedness because I am the Son of Goodness, yea, the Snake and the Lamb am I . . . All things am I and that which is named Good is of me, as that which is named Evil is of me. . . .

"All things am I, and I am to be found in all things, saith the Lord."

"I really must be going," said the Unique, and he departed.

Elphénor followed him to the door, gave us the benefit of his skill in banishing Rituals and resumed his seat and the thread of his narrative. He became once more most interesting, and his powerful personality was shown more prominently by the weird surroundings, magical weapons, and objects scattered around him. "*Si monumentum quaeris, circumspice.*"

III

CASSIVA, Elphénor began, was a creature such as few of us would like to describe, albeit I, for one, would have no fear of meeting her double or her re-incarnation. When all is said, she remains a female of attractive temperament; and so did Cyprian Babord, the sailor, find her. She was pretty but especially harmonious. Yes, that is the word; she was a creature of harmony, made for harmony, longing for it. Therefore a born magician, and upon her do I call your sympathy. Her angelicalness, if any, was more apparent than real. Cyprian learned that at his expense. But what could be expected of a pretty girl, with Jupiter and Mercury in the tenth house of her horoscope and Neptune in Taurus in the eleventh? She had heard no harmonious sound but the voice of Thalassa and the grunts of her mother and her pigs. Little wonder if Cyprian's timid wooing called to life some strange possibilities within her. Cassiva fell into the clap-trap of a deep passion for him, a passion which was to carry her further than the little island and the cottage by the sea. Verily much further, but not sensibly nearer anywhere; for, as I said, she proved herself a coward.

Cyprian Babord and Cassiva escaped to some little

town of mediaeval Germany. Their love was sincere, I suppose. Anyhow, it lasted. Cyprian remained the Prince Charmant. Cassiva it was who came down from her pedestal when Cyprian discovered her pecancy. He was a weak-minded, true-hearted, simple fellow, whose motto might have been that of the ivy: "*Je meurs où je m'attache.*" She, well, she was a creature born for harmony, whose being sighed for harmony, who could not help working towards the Great and Final Harmony that is coming. Yet had she much to learn and many a new birth to undergo.

Cassiva became a student of the Great Arts and dipped her lips in the Holy Cup. Cyprian went to sea.

Cassiva learned much and left also much unlearned and unpractised. Cyprian returned.

The fierceness of her passion for him hid at first from his eyes the great change which she had undergone. But the time passed, and if her passion grew yet fiercer, Cassiva's new interest in life became more apparent. Her calls left him tired; her magical practises repelled him. She knew of Magic but what the less refined folk of her time could teach her: and, if her teachers were numerous, they were also ignorant. I myself knew little enough. Her new favourite was an old sorceress who knew even less, the superstitious old sow. Toads, nails taken from a child's coffin, herb of the nine shirts, and many other repellent ingredients—such was her stock-in-trade, and Cassiva was initiated in the art and use thereof. Cyprian liked it not. Cyprian was a modern individual. Cyprian might have

caught at Theosophy; he refused to accept Magic, let alone the silly pseudo-sorcery of his time.

Nevertheless, magic it was—of a kind. Cyprian Babord was destined to learn it. The more he grew to hate the practises of his mistress, the more did she seek to regain his affections by a deeper study of sorcery. The old woman was now her only teacher, I the looker-on.

The first error of Cassiva was to think that she had lost his affections, when she had merely lost his respect, and this was of little account. Her second error was that she lost her head. In her trouble she ran to the haunt of the old witch.

"I am in sore trouble," she said.

"Aha! trouble comes to the likes of ye, my dickie. What is it you want? An amblotic draught?"

"I want a philtre."

"For a new lover, dearie? Ay, I'll make one now."

"I want no new lover. I love but one man, and he is now tired of me. He despises me because of your sorcery. Oh! I wish I were dead. I won't have anything more to do with you!"

"Hark ye, my dears," the witch snarled, "hark ye to the little hussy. Come, my cats and my snakes and my toads and my dear piet and thou, my invisible Pigwidgeon. What vengeance can be ours for her contempt of our Art?"

"Of course," Elphénor went on, dreamily curling his fingers over a thick cigarette of fragrant kif, "the

piet was none other than your *Cher Maître ici présent*. Do you doubt my word, you tape-worms in the belly of NOUN?" he added, addressing each of us in succession.

We protested, indignant of his question, and, after muttering some remarks about "lackadaisical lachrymose knollers of the Unholy Bells," he returned to his tale.

However, it was written that Cassiva was to have her way. The old witch's anger was more assumed than real, and she exclaimed presently:

"The hand of Glory! The Hand of Glory!"

And the foam came to her lips, and she twisted and wriggled and writhed her pestiferous wrinkly old shape in the trance of her vision. I flew to and fro, over and around her, as it had been my duty to do on previous occasions, occasionally beaking and plucking her yellow skin, not without a strong feeling of disgust, not without a certain pleasure, nevertheless, for I pinched hard. When her panting became a coherent speech, she spoke to Cassiva.

"I can tell the whole truth of the case. Your lover has been given a philtre, and his love has been attracted towards another woman. If you promise never to ask for my help in future, I will help you now. 'Tis a Hand of Glory we want. I see a man hanging himself in a near forest. Let us go there this instant. My Pigwidgeon will show us the way."

"There were, of course, many different manners by which the Hand of Glory could be prepared for magical use," Elphénor remarked. "My old witch

used the simplest. We came to a part of the forest where she said the Hand was to be found. There she bade Cassiva remain, while she herself, with me on her shoulder, went a little further. Presently we saw right enough a human body balancing itself from a low branch. Albeit it gave the unmistakable sign of the Hanged Man, it was not altogether without life, and, as we cut its left hand without much ado, it shook and danced so that the cord broke. It fell in a lump on the dead leaves, and there we left it.

“We returned to Cassiva, with the hand hidden in a piece torn from a sheet of linen which had been stolen from a coffin and kept for such occasions. The sorceress walked back without a word, in spite of Cassiva’s anxious questions and evident fear of some unknown and mysterious danger. When we came home each of us took a part in the ceremonial. The witch squeezed the blood out of the hand; I pulled every hair and nail with my beak; the toad spat on the palm; the cats scratched it until deep dry cuts showed all the bones. My mistress then threw it into a deep earthen pot, adding salt, pepper, zymate, saltpeter to taste. She baked it all in her oven for an hour, during which time she mixed in a basin a certain unguent, most elaborate, the secret of which I am not willing to give you.

“Cassiva, during all these proceedings, seemed lost in a dream which had nothing very pleasant to offer her, if I could judge by her groans and by the sweat that covered her face.

“When all necessary operations had been performed, the witch gave Cassiva the hand in a bag and the un-

guent, with clear instructions. Then she sent her home. When we were left alone, she chuckled convulsively, her toothless mouth wide open; then bade me, her dear piet, go and watch the things that were to happen."

IV

“CASSIVA went home and entered her bedroom, whereinto I followed her. She was trembling in all her limbs. But her passion was stronger than her fear, and she carried out her instructions.

“Taking the Hand of Glory with her own left hand she closed her eyes, and, with the index of her right hand, she tried blindly to touch one of the dead and dried fingers. When she felt one, which happened to be the thumb, she opened her eyes, and anointed it with the unguent, calling Cyprian by name three times.

“Then she lit a candle, and at the light thereof ignited the anointed thumb. Of a sudden she became aware of a presence and fell on her knees, while the flame burnt radiantly.

“‘Cyprian, darling,’ she cried, ‘tell me that I have not lost your love.’

“Indeed she had not. From the dark corner of the room, a human shape came forward and gave to the happy Cassiva unmistakable signs of love and desire. I personally had my own doubts, but she recognized Cyprian, and it was not my business to interfere.”

At this point of the tale, Elphénor was interrupted by a question of the Probationer already mentioned;

and the most untimely interruption worked the Master into a wild frenzy.

"No, I am not going to satisfy your foul longing for erotic description. I shall draw a veil. Ah! you require details! I shall disappoint you. Do I not know you, prurient hyena, diver escaped from the depth of degradation, unable, although longing, to return thither. Don't I know you? By Tefnut, I do! What for this affectation? Is it not written of you that. . . . Here, some one, pass me my Aristophanes. Open it at the end of the first scene of the 'Acharnians,' or thereabout. Pass me the book. Here you are :

How durst you, you baboon, with such a beard,
And your designing wicked rump close shaved,
To pass yourself upon us for a eunuch?

By the way, pass me a cigarette. I am rather glad you interrupted, now that I have vented my impulsive anger. But do not over-excite me!

"Let us back to our Cassiva and the incubus, her visitor. For, in spite of your natural dullness, you have guessed it, I suppose; an incubus it was, apeing her Cyprian Babord. The imitation was so perfect that she was deceived and had a little *vice versa* with the demon.

"We now come to the climax. There was noise and tumult in the street below, and the door was presently pushed open. Two couples of men ascended, carrying a heavy burden, which they laid presently at the feet of our lady. Her visitor departed in a hurry through the ceiling; I hid in a corner.

“Lo, the burden was the body of a man! The body of the man was that of Cyprian Babord, sailor. He had been found in the forest, with a foot or so of rope hanging from a branch above him; his left hand had been cut off. He was now dead.

“Cassiva fainted. The fearful knowledge had been too much for the poor fool. She showed herself a coward, lacking the presence of mind to call back her ghastly visitor and deny the identity of the real Cyprian. Oh, the damnable coward! She was instantly punished. Convicted of occult practices, she was flogged there and then by the four men. Taking me for an accomplice, one of them twisted my neck round and round, and set me free. . . . Did I not wish I had been a woman—instead of a bird!

“Cassiva escaped and returned to the cottage on the gravel soil of Charm Island. She found her mother dying. She also found a few young hogs, born during her absence. One had come to life at the precise moment of the piet’s death. I was he. We passed a few years happy by the waves. What a delightful corner of the globe it was! There was no house to be seen on either way, and our pig-styes were clean and beautiful. When I trotted by the sea with Cassiva, and she petted me affectionately, I often looked up towards the hill and delighted in the sight of our habitation. It was like a pure white egg in a green nest of moss and twigs, with the trees rising behind it and the ferns around. The corner which we preferred was never caught sight of by the sun, so thickly was it roofed by the palm and rubber trees. There were oaks

too, planted for my kind, but their fruit was very tasteless. There she used to tell me all about her life, as if I did not know it. She regretted her dead baby more than her Cyprian, I think, and that was not at all strange. She regretted the incubus more than the baby, I wager.

“As for magical pursuits, she did not neglect them. But I could not help her in that. To cut it short, when she died Cassiva became a vampire. When *I* died, I became a true worshipper of the Highest, putting into practice a few rules which my hog-ness had given me time to lay down, and gradually working towards my present—and last—existence.

“What do you think of it all?”

This was addressed to one of us, who answered with true modesty.

“Master, in spite of my high intellect, I could not condense more knowledge in such words, as few as they were well chosen.”

Elphénor marched to him and bowed deeply. Then he gave the sign of Shu and Tefnut, the twin Pillars, and said slowly:

“Hail to the Son of the Servant of God!

In the midst of the PAUT art thou!

Hail, thou who comest adoring the INFANT!

Hail! O worker who followeth his lord, though the follower of the god Bast attendeth him not!

Behold, there are rebellious hearts, hating the Temple, but the End of all things strikes them upon their necks!”

I stood by the left of Elphénor Pistouillat de la Ratiboisière, gave the sign of Our Lady Hathor, and said to our brother:

“Hail, thou crowned lord of the Feast!”

He bowed to us and we all stood up facing the Setting Sun, and began the litanies of Hathor.

“She cutteth off the heads of the enemies in this her name of Lady of Tepka.

“Oh, Lady of the Beginning, come thou before our faces in this thy name of Hathor, lady of emerald, lady of Uast the holy!”

Late into the evening we psalmed, until the Hour of Bliss.

THE MAN-COVER

To
E. V. R.

THE MAN-COVER¹

O

THE flesh of the neck was much swollen, the little legs somewhat stiff; the eyes wore a sad and tired expression. . . . I am referring to a pigeon. The swollen neck was hidden by a soft grey down, the legs still held their burden, the eyes looked ahead—yet the symptoms of fatigue were apparent to a connoisseur of pigeons.

And I am that. Once upon a time I was the happy proprietor of hundreds of carrier-pigeons. Misfortune and a short acquaintance with some faddists caused me to drown my ennui. I drank most of my pigeons—dozens at the time—or rather their equivalent in temperance drinks. I ruined my health. An illness followed, long and painful; the doctor's bill took the rest. . . . But let us forget!

Now the pigeon came through my window, stood on the ledge and waited. It was a carrier, and it had a message. I took the pellucid note from the tube, and read its short contents, which aroused my curiosity.

“Kidnapped—Prisoner—have written report. Ignore where pigeon goes, but trust the recipient will read this and send back the pigeon with a note giving news of England. Are Radicals still in power? Shall send the letter by return of carrier. Please fill up tubes with films. Extraordinary adventures!!!”

It was strange and it attracted me. I fed the bird, put a short answer of a few words—“*Courage. Send message; there are no Radicals*”—and a supply of fresh films in the tubes, and, kissing

¹ Reprinted from the “EQUINOX” of September 1909, with the kind consent of the Editor.

its head, let it go with a sigh. Then my luck returned, and I forgot all about it until last week, when the pigeon came again. It was heavily loaded. I shall not reproduce all the notes, nor the whole of my correspondent's letter. I undertake all the responsibilities, and reserve, in consequence, my editorial right.

However, and as a last preliminary, the reader will be glad to mark the following part of the letter :

"I beg of you, sir," concludes the Man-Cover, "not to send me any proofs before publication. It would be but an unnecessary trouble to you; to me such a mark of regard from an unknown benefactor would prove a burden and give occasion to my enemies for recrudescence of persecution. My mail is sure to be ransacked, if indeed I am to be blessed with any communication from the living. But when all the instalments are published and my name is flying from lip to lip, then, and then only, you, whoever you are, noble champion of the Men-Covers, please send me thirty-one copies to be given away.

"I claim no royalty—no money—no consideration! The creature who accumulates the most extremely interesting and highly noble characteristics of a cover and of a man can but shrink with horror from the very idea of a vulgar coinage. Only please send in a cheque for £1,000 to the secretary of the S.P.T.B.P.¹ as an anonymous gift, to be nevertheless published in the records of the daily and periodical Press all over the world."

It is a big order for a man who despises money. My correspondent seems to know the powers which rule the world: Capital and Publicity. Alas! the puppies will keep on losing part of their tails in spite of the S.P.T.B.P., because of that third power, Fashion. As for the £1,000, I may—or I may not. . . . But we are digressing. To use an expression from the French, somewhat slangy, but expressive, "*Je passe le crachoir à l'orateur.*" I believe the author to be mad. I nevertheless think it necessary to state that I am *not* an authority on insanity.

¹ After a long and painful inquiry the present writer found out the society referred to by his correspondent. It is the Society for the Prevention of Tail-biting for Puppies, and stands in great need of generous contributions.

I

Ever since long before my birth I led a peaceful existence. As I grew, Science attracted me, and Art, and Poetry; my favourite recreation was the conversion of puppy-owners to the generous belief in the regeneration of the canine race by the preservation of their caudal appendage. Also the genius which breathed within me caused me to leave my house on the fifth of November. Passing through a crowded street, I was surrounded by urchins who greeted me by the name of Guy Fawkes. I hurried home through a torrent of rain.

A man was pacing my street, muttering strange words which I could not understand. The rain, which fell heavily, had apparently not the slightest effect in cooling his heated brain. As I passed him I spoke:

“What a wretched night!”

The sound of my voice startled him. He seized my arm and hurried me towards the lamp-post. Then he stared at me for a long time, and, speaking slowly, hammering every syllable in my ear, while the rain continued its monotonous lamentation, he began:

“I should be very much surprised if this were not the cover I am waiting for. No fallacies will induce me to free you now that at last I have found you. I was dead; my life was nothing more than a spring

without motion. Every twenty-one days, according to the calendar, I came, pacing the lonely streets of this remote spot. For two hours each time did I wait and wait, longing, eager, nervous, hopeful, hopeless, desperate, distressed, with gigantic thoughts crowding my mind. I almost despaired of seeing this moment ; at last it has come. I forgot the duties of art, the call of reason, the fear of uncertain meetings, the very natural care for the most precious existence on this planet. But I am well rewarded. You have come. My globe of transparent crystal had shown me the truth. You have come, escaping my enemies, and you are for the time being at my disposition."

I thought at first that the man was under the influence of drink and that it was useless to argue with him. Besides, I am not very daring with strangers, especially when they speak in such questionable riddles. Accordingly I said nothing, but tried gently to regain my liberty. Alas! his grasp was stronger than my desire of liberty, and the only result was that he pinched me closer.

"I was dead," he resumed, "and my beautiful and lofty thoughts were wandering through space, shapeless and without expression. The cover which enclosed the shrine in which they were kept had been stolen from me, and my foes were expecting my surrender. Happily an angel sent by God ordered me to come out every twenty-one days, and promised me that I should find here the cover which I needed. I have it now, and mean to keep it."

"But what are you talking about?" said I. "I am a man; here is my house; and I don't know anything

about your cover. You are mistaking me for some unknown person or object, sir; pray let me go."

"Let you go! Abandon once more the cover which shall keep my thoughts in! *You are mad!* Besides, why do you speak? And how is it that you come in such a shape?"

"I tell you I am a man. Leave me alone, or I shall have to call for assistance and give you in charge. I am a savant and a nobleman, known all over the world, I daresay."

"I am no fool, and I shall keep you. Come, I must be off to Brighton to-night; I have left my thoughts in the coverless box there."

"I shall not go to Brighton, sir! Are you mad? Do I look like a piece of wood?"

"The appearance has nothing to do with the case. As to madness, I fear I *should* have gone mad *if* I had not found you at last. Come; my men are waiting, ready for any emergency, and I shall be compelled to use their strength if you refuse to follow me. We are off to Brighton, and I shall there put you in your proper place. Oh, my thoughts, my lofty thoughts," he went on, "you shall to-night be sequestered from the world of your enemies!"

I should like to know, dear unknown being to whom my winged friend will bring this letter, what you would have done in my place! How was I to escape? There was certainly not the slightest doubt that the man was a lunatic. Now, as it happens, lunatics have always been exceedingly interesting to me. Here was a case for my curiosity. This fellow, thought I, must have

deceived the vigilance of his guardians, and I shall find no difficulty in having him arrested at the railway station, or at least on our arrival at Brighton. So I followed him. At the turning a big motor-car was waiting, and two men stood by on the pavement. They bowed silently before my companion, and made me enter the car.

One of them took charge of the driving, and the other followed us two in the back seats. The man said but one word, "Scat," and we started at a terrific speed and were soon off on the road.

I began to feel uneasy; but prudence stopped my speech in time, and the man next to me began to titter. Then he spoke; and though he may have uttered different words, this is what I understood:

"You are trying to deceive us. I always notice such an attempt, even when it has only reached its mental stage. Indeed, I cannot help noticing it. No doubt you have heard of me; I am *the-man-whose-nose-sings-at-will*. That power has been granted me ever since I felt a strong impulse to kill my wife with an axe. I mastered my impulse, and by a triumph of my logical faculties I cut my own right arm. Having no arm, I could no more kill my wife with an axe. God rewarded me by giving me the power of reading thought, which constitutes an extra sense for me; and to my nose He gave a voice of its own. I was a dentist. Indeed, I have found a new way of extracting teeth without gas. You merely press the neck of your patient, who faints in consequence, and you can then safely operate. How did *you* come to this? What

caused you to take the attire of a man in place of the usual brown coat of a cover?"

His companion—friend or master—bade him keep silent for a while, and we journeyed in silence.

When we came in sight of Brighton the motor-car stopped suddenly in front of a large gate. The moment after we entered a park, and, the door being opened, I was taken into the house.

The man whom, so unhappily, I had met in the street was now alone with me. Without leaving me a moment's peace, he began to take my measure with the utmost care and caution. Then, pointing to a strong and broad cage, he ordered me to step in.

It would be very tiresome and quite useless for me to express here my various thoughts and the miserable consternation into which I was thrown. I would not live those hours over again for anything in the world, and had the devil been within my reach I should decidedly have given my soul to him in order that he should see me safely home. But no one came to my rescue, and, though most unwilling, I had to submit to my terrible fate.

When the cage, made of the strongest steel, was closed upon me, I found myself a prisoner in the most degrading state. I began to look around and to shake the bars of my grating, but in vain. The man-without-a-cover had gone.

My next step was to inspect the prison. And in so doing I discovered in the left corner a box, resembling a coffin in shape, though it was certainly not a coffin such as I delight in seeing daily in the windows of the undertakers. It was divided into compartments!

"Is this the box of lofty thoughts, I wonder?" said I to myself.

In that case the man must have had a certain degree of reason about him after all, for the box was far from being empty.

In the first compartment was a red flower, blushing deeply with all the purest carmine of Nature. The flower was certainly not freshly cut, but had preserved all its beauties and delectable perfume.

In the second compartment was a doll. Oh, not an extraordinary doll! A plain, common, hand-made wooden doll, which you could open in the middle, to discover inside it a second doll presenting exactly the same appearance. Just like those figureless old women of white wood made by the Russian peasants during the long evenings of their winter season. From the first to the last there were twenty-one dolls, one inside the other. The last was scarcely bigger than a poppy-seed, but presented exactly all the particularities of the largest one.

In the third compartment were two books. You may judge of my surprise when I opened them and found that no black stain polluted the immaculate white of their leaves. Only the binding bore some words. They were the titles of those unwritten books. Thus they ran:

"The book	"Advice to
which	Mankind
contains all that I know	for
for	a better use of their faculties."
certain."	

No author's name was to be seen.

In the fourth compartment was a little framed picture, and though I examined it very closely I was not able at first to realize what the subject of the picture was. From a shallow little boat a gigantic snake was seen to emerge, fiercely staring, and on the opposite corner was a round black spot. As, when a child throws a stone in a river, the waves extend farther and farther, shunning the bruises which the child has inflicted upon them, in like manner waves of a grey lighter and lighter as they extended towards the snake were painted in methodically eccentric gyrations. The last wave was almost white, and stopped at the head of the monster.

In the fifth compartment was a skull.

In the sixth compartment was a white rose, with a delicious scent.

In the seventh compartment, as well as in the eighth and last, I saw nothing, but a sweet music struck on my ear when I bent over them. The tunes were very different at first, one tender and soft, the other furious and thundering. At the end, however, both melted in a whisper, to die suddenly in a piercing cry of laughter.

And the man-who-lost-his-cover came into the room again.

"Well," said he, "I thought that by now you would have found your way to submit to necessity and re-integrate your real personality. What did you see in my box?"

I told him, and instantly he grew pale and staggered. But after a moment he looked furiously at me, and resumed his former manner.

"By God!" he said, "I cannot believe you. How

you have found out my secret and learned by heart the things which one ought to see in my box, but which one does not, I ignore. But you cannot possibly have seen them!"

I swore that I was no impostor. But he refused to listen to me, and called his two men. They came, and began verifying the measure he had taken of me.

"*Too long*," said he, when it was completed. "You have grown out of shape. We shall have to cut out and plane you in order that you should exactly fit my mighty box. However, as you pretend to have seen in it things which a cover cannot possibly see, I must give myself a day to think it over."

I felt instantly relieved, and began to hope again.

"Perhaps I shall not be cut out and planed after all," thought I; and smiled humorously upon the man.

Fool! I felt almost certain that a crueller punishment could not be conceived by the morbid imagination of a madman. And now I am here, in this secluded spot, with no prospect but the most horrible of lives. . . . But, dear unknown reader of this history, you to whom a trustworthy messenger will deliver it, do not let my personal sorrow trouble you because of this incoherent anticipation of the rest of my story. I should raise no sympathy in your heart by whimpering over myself. It is true that I am inclined to run riot in self-lamentations; but great men always are. And I shall try henceforth not to give way to that unwholesome tendency. I have much already to be forgiven.

In my cage, then, to resume, I was just passing from a state of dreadful mental agony to a more settled and hopeful disposition. For the second time the man-who-had-lost-his-cover left me alone; and I felt more relieved. He will never dare, thought I; and, after all, he does not look such a cold-blooded murderer. His eyes indicate some sort of inner life and his tone and voice are gentle at times. It is a joke, a mystification. . . . It must be.

Thus I tried to deceive myself, and I must admit that I utterly failed. Looking, then, around my prison, I began to feel a very peculiar sort of numbness coming over me. It was almost like intoxication, and I am not in the least ashamed to say that I know what intoxication is. I was drowsy; my head seemed to weigh as heavy as if it contained lead in place of the keenest brains. The coffin appeared to me a most comfortable bedstead, and the skull a soft pillow. A horrible attraction bent me towards the box, and in a moment I lay, stiff, snoring, over the eight compartments.

There is here a blank in my memory. Under the influence of a powerful narcotic, I was cut out and planed to fit the coffin exactly. About that time my tormentors must have been interrupted, for they forgot to nail me on the coffin, and the cage was hurriedly put on a motor and carried somewhere on the South Coast to the private yacht which, no doubt, was awaiting us. This is my way of explaining it, but of course it is a mere suggestion. It might have been an airship that took me away, independent of terrestrial laws,

regardless of Customs Duties—who knows, perhaps hovering over London and Scotland Yard and my dear old house in which I was so happy—but . . .
Nec scire fas est omnia.

The only thing I am certain of is that I was either planed to fit the coffin, or the coffin to fit me; and then I woke up. I was on board a sea- or air-ship. Believe me, she was in great danger.

However, this would prove a useless narrative. The floating machinery suffered, was nearly wrecked; the crew suffered, nearly perished; I suffered, and nearly died. After the storm was over I found myself on the shore of this island with the box; a small cage out of which two carrier-pigeons, almost dead with hunger, were struggling to escape; three sailors of the crew; the man-whose-nose-sings-at-will, and a dog; while my tormentor and the other souls were drowned, I suppose, or thrown upon some other land. It seems now almost as if I should wish my tormentor to be here. I might cure him; and at all events he would be compelled by necessity to adopt a more lenient attitude towards me. Besides, now that he has made me to fit his box, the worst is over. . . .

Here takes place an incoherent discussion on the bitter taste of sea-water and the possibilities of its sweetening, after which the MS. comes to an end. I have sent back the pigeon, and expect to receive a new supply of facts—more precise than the vague and uncanny allegations contained in the first. If I may be allowed to make a personal suggestion, I am inclined to believe the writer to be as mad as any tormentor of his, real or imaginary. However, the MS. is human, and so . . . *imprimatur!*

II

CONSIDERING the bulk of the MSS. trusted to the carrier-pigeon by my correspondent, I decided to send an extra porter with the first bird, in case of the next message being of an equal or superior volume, and as I know something about pigeons, as before mentioned, I managed that in a very clever way.

I say clever because it is a very simple scheme in its cleverness, and nobody would say it if not I, but nevertheless it had to be found—like the egg of the late C.C. I bought a fine hen pigeon, and kept it with the Man-Cover's messenger, so that they could rub acquaintance. When I noticed the first symptoms of love I blessed the new pair and let them go. The new wife—as I thought she would—followed her husband.

They returned to me with the following strange document, and I think I must warn the reader against a certain feeling of sympathy towards the writer. The wickedness and cruelty with which he carries out his logical tendencies are too repulsive to permit of any sentiment of pity. His sufferings appear to be simply the consequences of a wild and unhindered imagination, and the real victims—the only ones to be pitied—are his unhappy companions.

That is, of course, in the case of the documents being an expression of reality. I am sure every one feels the necessity of clearing up this matter. Alas! there are no Radicals in this country—that is, persons acting in a radical manner—as I have written to the Man-Cover himself, and consequently I have little hope that H.M. Government will give any orders on the matter. I am afraid that if an expedition is sent over it will be commanded by some distinguished foreign officer. However, should

the expedition cover itself with ridicule by not finding the Man-Cover or his island, it is perhaps safer for the British reputation that it should be a foreign expedition. But to business!

Considering our present advanced state of civilisation, and how the Torch of Science has been brandished and borne about, with more or less effect, for 5000 years and upwards, as Carlyle puts it; and considering—as I think necessary to conclude, contrary to the immortal Scotsman—considering how very little more we know about the most important questions which concern the human race than did our tailed ancestors, it might strike the reflective mind with some surprise that, however unpleasant they may be from a personal point of view, the most wondrous and striking experiences which I am undergoing will doubtless be of no little help to the *bonâ-fide* thinkers of our present day. Dean Swift and Samuel Butler stand, no one will deny it, as the greatest benefactors of humanity. If my sufferings could prove of any utility, in their turn, I should feel myself proud and most happy to describe at length the life I am now leading with three sailors, a dog, a musician, a box whose value I am learning every day to appreciate more and more, and our carrier-pigeons, in a distant island.

I must begin methodically and give a systematic account of my life here. I trust that the Authority presiding over our destinies will look upon me as the most logical of all men. As the surroundings play an important part in our life, my first duty is to describe them. The island is a large one. When I have gone round it myself I shall perhaps be able to give a rough

estimate of its area. For the present I can but say: *it is a large island*. We have trees by thousands: water trees, from which, after the stems have been cut and slashed, the water pours down; kola-nut trees, papaw trees, with their flowers, male and female; dragon trees, fig trees, cocoa-nut palms, bread-fruit trees, and the rest. Beautiful birds are dwelling in the branches. All that is needed for life is abundant and easy to gather. The climate permits us to spend night and day in the open, and when I retire to sleep on the box whose cover I have turned out to be, my companions sleep in the trees.

No venomous or objectionable beast has yet dared to breathe the air of this balmy country. But it is not a deserted spot. The natives are black, but tame and pleasant, and one of my first steps will be to try and bring them into contact with the beauties of our civilisation. For this object the mighty box is of the utmost importance; and here I touch on the first difficulty which I encountered.

The destiny of man being precarious and unsettled, my soul was often wandering at large in its anxiety to provide for the future of the lofty thoughts of my late tormentor. I had banished all hatred and bitterness from my heart and forgiven my enemy. He had done me a great wrong, dragging me pitilessly away from the peaceful occupations of my life, cutting and planing my worthy form in order that I should fit his coffin. He had driven me to his ship, and was the cause of my present exile. Two young kittens had placed all their hope in me, and I was failing to fill my paternal

duty towards them. I was working at my great work, in fifty-two volumes, on the various elements composing the shell of the oyster, and I had almost completed my Introduction, when I was thus deprived of my liberty by the man-who-had-lost-his-cover. Yet I bore him no grudge. He was right; I feel it more intensely every day. A box so mighty needed a cover. In consequence, knowing that the hour of my death might strike at any moment, I had to find a man-cover to replace me in that event; one who would never forget to reintegrate the box every night.

Proceeding in order, I looked around me; and at once discarded the two pigeons and the dog. I had only to choose between the three sailors and the man-whose-nose-sings-at-will. As the latter was of great help to us, and kept the negroes amused for hours with the harmonious though plaintive accords springing at will from his nasal organ, there remained only the sailors. The natives were, of course, totally unfit for such a fate. They could find no inner delectation in the perpetual sufferings occasioned by so dreadful an ordeal—or doom!

Of the three sailors, one was much too short to prove of any use. If I could easily shorten, lop, prune, and curtail a too big substitute, I could not possibly add anything to that small pattern of our race. I decided, in consequence, to slay him during his sleep, so that a useless impediment might be done away with. As the four men, since the wreck of our ship, were sunk in a state of torpor and only stared at me with vacant looks, it proved easy to settle this slight

matter. I removed the body; and left to time and the natural dryness of the air the care of dividing its various elements.

The man-whose-nose-sings-at-will was the first to notice the absence of the sailor, but he said nothing to me. In fact, I believe him to be mad also. He is continually looking anxiously towards the east, and seems lost to this world, since his friend or master has disappeared in the wreck. From the middle of his face gushed a sad tune, and from his eyes many a bitter tear; but, as I said before, he addressed me not. I was not a little surprised, as he is the only one with me to know the secrets of the box. But I respected his silence.

The two others were more suitable for my purpose. One was a strongly built fellow, with a certain air of intelligence about him; but he was yet too besotted with fear or moral distress to be made the recipient of my plans. So I had only one expedient left to me, and turned all my faculties towards the last of my companions.

He is not young by any means. His temples are already crowned with the grey silver of at least fifty years and his nose with the carmine of many gallons. But his remarkable acuteness renders him extremely valuable. When I opened my mind to him he simply lifted his eyes at me with a shrewd look and smiled gently with the smile of the Wise.

I told him the story of the meeting with my kidnapper; and explained to him the operation I had to go through before I could fit the coffin of lofty thoughts.

With the exception of the secret of the eight compartments, I opened my very soul to that worthy successor. He must possess a keen sense of humour; for he began gently, and dry-humour-like, telling me a quite different story. His smile, of course, showed that he was only trying to entertain me. According to his version, I am a well-known surgeon who had lost his reason and was taken to the private yacht of a celebrated alienist. As I seemed to be always talking of a coffin without a cover, one had been made of my size. Unhappily, says the sailor, a wreck happened; and the doctor who was to cure me has been drowned.

This narrative caused me to laugh heartily. I could scarcely keep my ribs together. I had no trouble in pointing out to him the contradictions in his story, and he soon agreed with me. When he saw, moreover, that I alone of us all was armed, and that the natives treated me with great respect, he put himself entirely at my disposal. I took advantage of this happy mood to offer him my services in order that he should be cut out and planed on the spot. But he looked gently into my eyes, and said that he himself would see to that. I told him of my experiments, and how I still had at times a certain illusion that my body was absolutely complete. But (he said) the case is common with all men amputated; and he promised me that in case of my death he should at once prepare himself to take my place at night on the top of the coffin. My mind being thus at rest, I began studying more deeply the contents of that mighty box.

III

THE two carrier-pigeons have come to me. I am glad to say they look very happy. Though there is still much to be published before we arrive at the part of the Man-Cover's adventures with which this last message is concerned, he informs me of such surprising news that I think it my duty to let my readers share it at once. The news is startling. Having received my letter, he threatens to blow the island into the air, should any vessel approach within three miles. He informs me of his absolute decision never to leave the place, and never to allow any one to come within the distance mentioned. Provided he receives my pledge never to reveal the situation of his new landed property, he promises to keep me informed of all his doings. For the sake of the tale, I have made myself an accomplice of his crimes and follies. I am ashamed of myself, but curiosity is stronger than shame. The carrier-pigeons have fled back to him with my word of honour. I was too anxious to know more about the Man-Cover, and my duty as a reporter has made me forget the moral ideas painfully inculcated into me by a life of hard experience and severely-paid-for mistakes. Scratch the man, you will find the beast. I must admit this has proved true for me also. It is the last time that I let my own personality come between the readers and the wickedly mad hero of this history, and I apologise for this intrusion. I now give place to him, and will publish his notes as I receive them.

The contents of the coffin have not suffered from the wreck. Here they all are, the books and the skull, the roses white and red, the picture and the doll. From the seventh and eighth compartments sprang

the same tunes. Truly, the sound reminded me of some hoarse singer, but the quantity of sea-water absorbed during the floating journey from ship to land certainly accounts for it. I shall gather a few lemons and rub the wood carefully with their juices.

Being a man of method and logic, I could not but begin with book-keeping. When they were dry the two books came very handy to me. I opened them at the first page, and started putting down with a blue pencil the most important among all the thoughts that came into my brain. In

“The book
which
contains all that I know
for
certain”

I began with these sentences:

“Your enemy, when his hatred and persecution lead you to a clearer perception of Life’s secrets, becomes your benefactor.”

“The men living in my company being unable to realise that my body is nothing but an illusion of their deficient sight, it is useless for me to try and oblige them to recognise it as a mere wood cover.”

“Their error will appear even more plausible and explicable when one considers that a few days ago I was myself unaware of my real personality; and that I am still at times under the influence of insufficiently keen senses.”

“The destiny of a Man-Cover being a case of ex-

ceptional scarcity, he cannot reasonably be bound by everyday morals and conventions. All that hampers him, all that comes in his way to prevent him from fulfilling his sacred duty, must be surmounted and overcome. What is crime in a man is often virtue in a cover."

Having thus established a sound and most solid basis of morality, which could be transmitted as a new gospel for the special use of the Men-Covers of future times, I opened the second book to put down in it some equally useful aphorisms. But as I took my pencil the white, immaculate page appeared covered with brown characters. I had scarcely time enough to read and they had vanished. But I remember what I saw.

"You must leave the study of the oyster-shells in order to perceive the invisible, to refine your senses and escape the delusions caused by them."

"The duty of man is not to believe other men. They speak either truth or untruth; but if they speak truth, even then is it a falsehood."

"All men are not necessarily obliged to kill their opponents or those who doubt them, or who are not of any use to them; but some men are—all Men-Covers are."

I was interrupted in the profound meditation that followed this discovery by the approach of a strong party of natives. My heir-apparent, if I may be allowed to use that expression in regard to a Man-Cover, was absent; and our two other companions had also made themselves scarce

These black men seemed to be frenzied with pugnacity, a very unusual disposition. After rapidly taking the advice of the skull, (the two books failing on the matter), I lay down in my usual place, protecting the lofty thoughts from impure contact, resolved to be pierced through and through rather than to let these black devils brush the holy books. To be pierced through could not do me much harm; and the holes would soon be stopped up by the skilful hand of my worthy understudy.

Evidently my attitude of passive resistance surprised the natives. They gathered around me and began singing a strange *mélopée*. One of their chiefs passed his hands over my face, and I became at once unconscious. . . .

When I awoke I was still covering the coffin, but the surroundings had changed. Over me was a huge canopy of magnificent trees in the full bloom of youth. Nature had certainly not been helped in the forming of that beautiful corner of the world; nevertheless a Japanese gardener, master of his art, could not have done better. Two gaps at the foot of the coffin were apparently waiting for posts to be planted. Wild flowers of all colours, some of a shade quite unknown to me, perfumed the air. It was no more the sunny afternoon, but a morning splendid and enchanting. The dew covered the prairie, and it seemed as if the grass were weeping lukewarm tears. At intervals a gentle breeze came, softly caressing the head of each blade of grass, refreshing them with its breath. Then Father Sol, moved also by sympathy, showed himself a while

before he was due, drying the tears of the green blades.

It dried also my coffin, and from the musical compartments came the *roulades* of an invigorated voice. As I heard also the panting breath of the negroes, I looked for them, and saw that, quite unaware of the tune, they were sitting at a little distance, all talking at the same time, carolling and shouting. But they were not, I gather, plotting any serious mischief. They saluted me in a friendly manner when they saw me leave the box and walk towards them. I must have been a long time lying over it, a whole afternoon and night, maybe, during my unnatural sleep.

I bowed gracefully before them; but they seemed amazed at my forwardness. As I was going to address them an awful feeling passed over me. My old fancy took possession of my brains again, and I imagined myself made of flesh and bones. I began to suffer as if my body had in reality become stiff and benumbed. Happily it was enough for me to turn and see the coffin, and my delusion fled. Moreover, I noticed that I had forgotten one of the most important things. The very colour of the coffin ought to have told the truth to me long ago. Of course I was now of a dark brown complexion, almost black, and this was the reason of their surprise.

A movement which I detected among them made me turn quickly towards my box. Too late, alas! The scoundrels had taken advantage of my few steps towards them, and were pillaging the coffin, keeper of lofty thoughts.

The piercing cry I uttered perplexed them. One had already the skull in his hands, but on hearing me he put it back in the compartment instantly; and they all began chanting a slow prayer, which I could not understand. I went back straight to the box, and, kneeling over it, sought consolation in the sweet tune of the two last compartments. When I turned round again the miserable, unintelligent creatures had gone, all but two, who advanced towards me. They were women of a lovely type.

IV

I WAS a prisoner. An inextricable entanglement of tropical creepers encircled the little oasis. A small path had been managed, but it was severely guarded at the other end. What doom had been prepared for me? For what purpose had these two handsome creatures been left with me? I only reproduce here an infinitesimal part of the numberless thoughts which came to my mind in that moment.

However—for this would prove too long a narrative—I soon ceased ruminating upon the future, for the women began singing a sort of cheerless lay. “How, fah, fah, how, loh, hew, hew,” it went on, and I could foresee no end to the romance. In the meantime the maidens advanced towards me, and while their thoughts gave way to the noise referred to already, their hands soon began gently scratching my head, as if to prey upon my hair. I have always been rather sensitive to feminine beauty, and when they leant gracefully over me and began patting my cheeks, I thought how simply delightful it would be to desert my duties, abandon my coffin, and live as a man who is not a cover. I was soon to feel ashamed of this intention.

After they had indulged in that little recreation they changed the tune of their lay and gave the same words with another air, which recalled at once to my mind the

chorus of the "Suppliants." As a matter of fact they were asking me for some favour. At the sight of real tears rolling down the faces of these two most lovable creatures, so handsome and graceful, so perfect in all their proportions, my pity was set in motion; and soon love was to follow, thought I. Though of a slightly dark complexion, they were none the less remarkably pretty, and very near the finest type of white womanhood. Alas! their beauty was a trap, their sweet voices were meant to delude me; the sirens had been sent by those who could not but mean persecution against me.

I found this out as soon as I understood them. They wanted my flowers. With a supple and harmonious gesture they suggested that I should let them have the mystical roses. As soon as I perceived their intentions I felt the most intense impulse to murder them. We talked for a long time without being able to gather much of each other's thoughts. At last I turned to the books in the coffin, and in the book containing

"Advice to
Mankind
for

a better use of their faculties"

I saw, traced by an invisible hand, the following advice:

"Be careful of womanly traps."

"Let the roses be planted; they are meant for that purpose."

"A cover cannot fall in love except with boards and planks. Beware of the fallacies of sense."

As anyone may understand, my mind was a pandemonium, but still I could not refuse to submit to so clear an order, and I handed the roses to the maidens. I had not to repent the concession. They clasped their hands and smiled upon me; then planted them instantly in the two big holes of which I have spoken already. The result was immediate. The plants began growing and growing, blossoming in many parts of their stalk, and their odour delightful my nostrils.

But this meant no peace for me. The two females, truly, shrank from me, but my senses were speaking in a rough way. They sat at the other end of the oasis; and looked on with wide-open eyes of delight as the two sweet and scented plants continued to grow. I could not detach my sight from the girls, and for the first time my ear did not perceive the music of the two compartments. It seemed to me as if there were two personalities in me, one simple and natural, as becomes a wood cover, the other complex and full of passions, as if I were really the man whom I knew to be no more. I took the skull in my hands, and suddenly a light broke its way into my soul. How could I be deluded this time? I had arms and hands; I "SAW" them. I saw the women, I saw the coffin. It was not the feeling of a plain piece of brown wood. I almost went mad over the discovery. What was the meaning of all this? I then opened the book again, but scarcely had I time to glance at the white page before a large band of negroes came again to me; and this time I could not keep them at a distance. They chained me and drove me away. I fell unconscious.

At my awakening I found that I was alone by the shore with the old sailor, my willing successor. When he saw that I opened my eyes he spoke gently to me:

“Are you better now?”

“What has happened?” said I, instead of answering his question.

“Oh, you have been very ill for many days with brain-fever. You must not speak too much.”

“What? Where is the coffin?”

“The negroes have it; they have carried it away into the interior. But I suppose you are cured now?” he added in an anxious tone.

I shall not repeat the conversation that ensued. Enough to mention that I discovered the old sailor to be absolutely mad. And being unable to persuade him that I was still firmly convinced of being the cover of the lost coffin, I found it better to agree with him. And soon he fell into the trap. Hiding the longing after my box and its contents, the doll and the skull and the mighty books, I spoke to him as if completely unconcerned about the loss, and unrolled a scheme for civilizing the natives. He told me of a little hut under the canopy, where my two wives were waiting for my arrival, as soon as I could get up and walk there.

He did not expect me to do so before a long while, but he was wrong. With a cautious look around me, I began creeping slowly towards him; and before he could call anyone I had jumped at his throat. I had my idea; and being a logical man, I wanted to carry it out faithfully, without losing an instant. We struggled a long time; and as I was getting exhausted, I suc-

ceeded at last in taking his knife, and sank it into his stomach.

It was not very pleasant for me to see his blood running black and hot on the sand; but I had to perform this execution, owing to his obstinacy. It was safer to destroy my understudy, as I had called him till then in my happy thoughts, and try afterwards to get another one to fill his place. His hint about my wives suggested to me that I might soon have a child whom I could bring up in the idea that he was to take my place. I could also shape an infant better than an old seaman. So I left him to the whales and other fishes, and proceeded towards the oasis. The two wives he had spoken of were the same women who caused my last illness. But their sweet smiles prevented me from using any abusive language, which, in fact, they could not understand.

Well aware that I was fated to conceal my thoughts for a very long while, I allowed them to advance and attend upon me. In that way began my new life as master of a harem. At first the negroes treated me with a certain reserve, even with hostility; but they soon changed, seeing me so tame and amiable. As the story goes,

The King of France and forty thousand men,
They drew their swords and put them back again.

But I now perceive that my narrative will appear almost incoherent if I do not at this point of the history pass over a few incidents and the daily toil of civilizing, in order to state immediately the chief facts.

The negroes after a while submitted to me; my two

wives are most attentive, and wait upon me with a laudable zeal. The strongly-built sailor, who has recovered from his fear, is my most devoted lieutenant, and as his ideas are scarce he never asks for any explanations, and faithfully carries out all my orders.

The man-whose-nose-sings-at-will I have put in irons. His mutism was beginning to upset me. The natives enjoy immensely their visit to the cage, where, as a canary should, he continually sings through his nasal appendage.

The circumference of the island is somewhat over fifteen miles, and the first discovery I made was that of a broken-down sailing-boat, which the niggers had never dared approach since the wreck that brought it there. In the cabins I found gunpowder in large quantities, rum, matches, and tobacco; I had all this carried to my oasis, together with a cannon; and when the negroes had heard the voice of this powerful engine my authority was established on the most solid basis.

This event helped me to recover the coffin, and I am glad to say that nothing had been done to it to spoil it. I had two hundred natives hanged, and as many burned alive, for form's sake, and in order to show their fellow black men that my justice was impartial; but apart from this unimportant little fact nothing followed the recovery of the mighty box.

I had undertaken the difficult task of civilizing the negroes; and as it would be quite impossible for me to lose for an instant the sight and thought of my personal mission, I was not a little perplexed at the

duality it presented at first. But I soon found out the truth. Cut in the most precious wood of the island, a cover was made of my shape, and prepared to take my place every time my various duties should call me away. Acting upon the advice of my wives, I had the coffin hidden from sight; and only once a month, when the moon breaks up with her thinnest crescent, are the natives admitted to the contemplation of its contents.

Before I again take to the main road of my history, which I shall neither leave again nor follow further than necessary, I must give a word of praise to my wives. Of course the poor creatures think I am a mere man, but apart from this little error they treat me gently and worship me so much that they seem very much concerned every time I venture out of their sight. The sailor, my lieutenant, calls them "Nurse," but then he is such a simple fellow!

Remembering the Laws of Manu, and how it is there said that there are seven kinds of wife, *i.e.*, a wife like a thief, like an enemy, like a master, like a friend, like a sister, like a mother, like a slave, and that the last four are good and the last of all the best, I cannot quite agree with the Ancient. My wives are of the best, and I am afraid they are like a master to me, though their authority is always tempered with sisterly manners. And what fine cooks they both are! They will help me to civilize our negroes.

This task seems to me the most important. All the civilized world may disappear; and we must have cultured beings to put in its place. Have you never

thought of the dreadful doom perhaps reserved to our race; of the very slight disturbance that might reduce to nothing all our proud civilization, leaving only the puniest and less fitted amongst human beings? All to be begun anew! As perhaps it has begun again more than once in one planet or another—even in our own little one—along the past centuries. Nothing, nothing will be left, perhaps; not a book, even the Bible; not a statue, even “Demeter” or “La Vénus”; not a piece of art of any kind, save, mayhap, the skull of a monkey floating upon a new and fathomless Ocean. Worse even!—things might be preserved that would lead to serious blunders for our successors. Think of their extremity if the future students of our times should find as the only documents concerning our modern life a complete edition of the works of Miss Corelli or some of the numerous Utopias that are poured on us at the present time. Why, they would not then be surprised at our total disappearance!

I am afraid I am digressing again. But I must warn you against your intrusion upon me. I just have your message, and if you should at any time attempt to interfere with my mission, or try to have some one sent to my rescue, I would without the slightest hesitation blow our island into the air. And now let us back to my adventures.

I am sorry to say that no subsequent MSS. came to me from the Man-Cover.

THE HOLY PILGRIM

To
Count Wladimir Svareff,
I inscribe this
the most deeply earnest tale ever
written—with its twofold moral.

THE HOLY PILGRIM

“**W**HAT, again! You want another candle, Maria Kirilovna? Have you not bought one already this morning? Are you going to have an illumination; or is the pope coming to perform an anointing? But no, there is no one ill with you, and, besides, it would be a taper you would be wanting. And it is to-morrow that He rises from the dead.”

“My husband broke the one I bought this morning.”

“Broke it! And could you not stick it together by melting the sides? However, one must not refuse to do business, especially on Easter Eve. Here is your candle. Thank you, Maria Kirilovna.”

The young woman, a little embarrassed, and apparently anxious to avoid further questions, ran home. On entering the house she put the candle in a box, climbed on to the top of the stove, and, stretching herself out, pressed her arms across her chest.

In a corner of the room, crouching motionless, sat the old grandmother, her little eyes, usually expressionless, full of a childish terror.

And with good reason. Gregor Nikitich, Maria's husband, was pacing round and round the room, stamping on the boards and muttering unintelligible

words; and the more he walked, and the more he turned, the more terrifying became the expression of his face. Without stopping or slackening his pace, he tried to beat his wife where she lay on the stove with a stick that was in his hand. When he saw that he could not reach her, he gave it up with an angry gesture.

"Thirty-eight versts, and there are still twenty-seven to Archangel," he grumbled.

"You have only walked thirty-six versts, Gregor," said his mother in a broken voice.

"Thirty-eight, Babouchka."

"Thirty-six, Gregor."

"Every time I spat in the corner I did a verst! Count; there are thirty-eight spits. May the Virgin of Smolensk have pity on me!"

"Very well, have your own way. But you have only walked thirty-six versts."

The peasant stood for a moment in front of his mother with a look of fury, then shrugged his shoulders, and cried to his wife: "Go and fetch Ivan Carlich."

And as she jumped from the stove he struck her a blow across the shoulders with his stick. She went out.

"Give me the vodka, little mother," said Gregor. And he poured a long draught down his throat. Hardly had he put down the bottle when his wife returned, followed by a young man carrying a balalaika.

"Ah, so, greeting; very good; tune up, and I will continue my pilgrimage. The Babouchka says there are still twenty-nine versts."

"But, Gregor Nikitich, it seems that you have

walked the whole day and night already. How is it that you have not arrived?"

"It is that stupid creature's fault. Give us some tea, wife."

"Seest thou," he continued, "since I promised to go a pilgrimage to the Holy Place of Archangel if I should recover, my soul troubled me because I did not fulfil my vow. And I saw before me the chapel, and the pilgrims, with the flames of the tapers before gold-framed ikones, and the priests and their fine ornaments. And the devil pulled me at night by the feet. As it was impossible for me to find a copeck for the journey, I had the idea of making the pilgrimage by turning round the room. But," he added, blinking his eyes in the direction of his wife, "that fool makes me count wrong."

Ivan Carlich was not by nature talkative. He gave a familiar shrug of the shoulders, and began tuning his balalaika. Gregor Nikitich started walking again as soon as the music began. From time to time he grumbled inarticulately.

"There, that's another verst; and I spit, you see, Babouchka. Here I must pass the little village where lives the son of your sister. You know; the one who has the fine horse. And he will give me tea and vodka, . . . pass me the bottle, little mother."

And for some time he turned thus to the sound of the music. Then he would sing a hymn. Then Ivan Carlich had to go, and the mutterings began again. Maria now attended to household matters. Suddenly a shower of blows fell on her back.

"There, fool, daughter of a toad and of a bug, that's for you, who make me go wrong again. May the devil . . ."

He stopped his oath in time, lest he should destroy the good effect of his pilgrimage, but continued to beat his wife. At last the latter fell on her knees, and he allowed his stick to drop, then continued his march, muttering:

"There, now, I have lost half a verst. And I must arrive for when He rises from the dead."

In a corner his wife bared her shoulders, and rubbed them with the candle bought some hours earlier. When the whole candle had gone in this way she dressed herself, and, wrapping her shawl about her, ran to the neighbour.

"I must have another candle still, Sophie Ivanich."

"What! so! another candle? But you are going to exhaust my store. Perhaps your husband eats them, eh? However it is not my affair. . . . Here. . . ."

* * * *

Maria Kirilovna went back home. Her husband was still turning. She climbed on to the stove, and in spite of her bruises was soon asleep. Drunk with alcohol and piety, the pilgrim eventually *arrived* at Archangel. Then he went to bed.

In the morning she got up first, rubbed her back once more with the third candle, and prepared the gruel, the white cheese, and Easter eggs. Then the Babouchka and Gregor got up. And with the first tolling of the bell Ivan Carlich came in.

"Chrestos Woskres!" he said.

First the Babouchka answered: "Woistinou Woskres!"

Then Gregor and his wife said it.

And they all kissed each other on the lips.

THE NEGRESS

To
J. F. C. Fuller

THE NEGRESS

A FAIRY TALE

ABOUT twenty versts from Moscow, towards the East, is a pretty village; in this village there is a house belonging to a wealthy prince whose wife has just died. And to amuse his children, who have no longer a mother, the Prince, who does not know how to play with them, has had sent from a far country a negress.

Oh, the poor black woman, living in this country of snow!

"It is the devil, or else his witch," said the peasants in their ignorance; and the big Fédor Ivanich, the prince's valet, died of fright on seeing her enter. But the children were not afraid, for they had some instruction. They knew that in the countries of America niggers are worth less than a rouble, and that they are beaten to make the sugar-cane grow. The youngest, who was five years old, began by scratching the negress to see if her blood was red also.

Oh, the poor black girl, suffering in the country of snow!

Never had she known love or affection, and she was

ready to love the first creature of God who should find itself disposed to be loved; and now children even refused her love and treated her like a wicked beast. Then she became sad, as one can only become sad when one has a very big heart, and, in order that the prince might not be angry and grudge the bread she no longer earned because she did not amuse the children, she died quickly.

Oh, the poor black girl buried in that country of snow!

The first evening after she had been put in the ground the children of the prince, two boys and a girl, had been in bed about a quarter of an hour when they began to see altogether extraordinary things happening in their room. Little pieces of a substance impossible to recognize, so numerous were they, and so small, began to dance about the beds. They fell from the ceiling, they entered by the lock and the door, and in spite of the double windows they came through the panes. And all were black, black as coal. The children of the prince were frightened and dared neither to speak nor to scream, nor even to close their eyes. They looked, looked, looked, terrified.

"It is the devil who is sending his armies," thought the eldest.

"It is beasts," thought the youngest.

"It is the negress," thought the little girl. And the little girl was right. It was the negress coming back to them. But it was the negress in tiny little bits. Her fingers and toes with the long nails danced madly around the little faces and tried to grip them. And

the pieces of the arms and the body with the bones tried to beat the children.

All of sudden there was a great noise and a big black ball came down through the chimney. It was the head of the negress, with her fine, soft eyes and her curly hair. And the eyes did not look a bit like eyes which weep. They were laughing. From the violet lips issued soft sounds, and the children heard the negress singing. She sang a beautiful song which she improvised to an air of her country.

My little fingers, you must not scratch,
And you must not scratch, my little fingers!
My little bones, you must not beat,
And you must not beat, my little bones!
And you must now come near me
To sleep.

You must no longer be black, my little fingers,
Here everything is white, you see.
It must be that you are loved, my little fingers,
And for that you must become white.
You must now come near me
To sleep.

My little fingers, you must disappear;
You must no longer be seen, my little fingers;
That is better still than becoming white.
My little bones, you must disappear
And remain here without being seen,
You must now come near me
To sleep.

And the fingers and the bones and the pieces of black flesh had obeyed the words of the negress. They had stopped dancing and scratching and hitting after

the first verse. At the second they had become pale, at the last they had become transparent. And all disappeared without going away.

Then the children were no longer frightened. And the youngest began crying because he had scratched the negress.

All three looked at each other and then the little girl got up; stumbling over the hem of her long white chemise she went to the beds of her brothers and kissed them. Then she went back to bed and she fell asleep, and in their dreams they heard the negress still singing, and saw her face smiling, quite white.

The children grew up, but their souls remained always fresh and young, and their smiles were joyous and were given to all things. They laughed and they were good towards men and beasts and flowers.

Because every night the white soul of the negress sang for them songs of her country.

The prince had not done badly after all, in sending for the negress to amuse his children.

And yet he knew nothing of that and thought he had spent the money in pure loss!

SHEOL

To
Reginald B. Haselden

SHEOL

A VARIATION ON A WELL-WORN THEME

I

PRIVATE Asylum! The words tell much, but even for the man endowed with the wildest imagination it is impossible to conceive what dreams are lived within the walls of a private asylum. No wonder if to the African a madman is the most sacred being under the sun.

Apart from the ordinary lunatic, who thinks himself the Almighty, or Croesus, or Napoleon, or the inventor of some incredible scheme to do away with human misery—all those who constitute the proletariat of insanity—there are the men and women with a really original madness, the members of the aristocracy of insanity.

Abraham Simpson's establishment was one of the most perfect and up-to-date asylums. It stood in its own grounds, eight miles away from the nearest little town, overlooking the sea, on the south coast of England. Fifty little cottages, each surrounded by a private garden, had been erected after the designs of the doctor himself, who, besides being a graduate of English, Austrian, and French medical schools, was a

distinguished architect, an excellent musician, and possessed in a high degree with the power of influencing the men and women who were placed under his control.

His own house was so situated that he could see whatever happened in any of the fifty cottages, and no communication could have been carried on, no visits paid, without his, or his staff's, being immediately aware of the fact.

There were no common madmen under the control of Dr. Simpson. He undertook the care of none but the most interesting cases, as a rule incurable, and the families concerned furnished him with a royal income for the keeping of his guests.

The latest arrival in the place caused Dr. Simpson to express the opinion that he had now under his charge the most interesting client he had ever had to deal with. A few days previously a prominent literary man had disappeared from his house. He had never shown any sign of madness, or even of eccentricity, and the thought of his being insane had never entered the mind of any one. The veil spread over his intelligence had come so suddenly, his wife said, that the truth had had no time to be known. He was handed over to Dr. Simpson during the night, while his friends were led to believe he had gone abroad in order to find documents for a new novel.

He was very gentle and seemed to take a deep interest in all things that were going on about the place. Yet he was mad—mad, Dr. Simpson said to the assistants, more than any patient he had ever been

called upon to look after. He was mad to such a point that all appearance of insanity had disappeared, and he had simply, late in life, started to live another existence. His physique had altered, his thoughts were concentrated upon subjects which he had never been known to be interested in, and the only sign of his insanity was the extremity to which he carried his ideas.

Abraham Simpson had a great personal charm and influence, and his main theory was that the specialist of brain diseases must needs be the intimate friend of his guests and inspire them with complete confidence.

"I am a savant; I carry on experiments," he used to say, "and thank goodness, my patients are not supposed to be cured. My aim is to study them, to make them happy, and to remain their friend till the day when they leave me."

Of course they only left him for the crematorium. That was one of the chief rules of the asylum, that all patients dying within its walls were to be cremated.

Needless to say, Abraham Simpson was soon a fast friend to his new client, and the latter—whom we shall call Bernard, though his name was somewhat more aristocratic—caused him no surprise when a month after his arrival he begged for a secret interview.

"He was awfully mysterious, sir," said the valet-attendant on transmitting the message.

"All right! Tell him I shall call this evening, at dusk."

II

“DO you know this?” Bernard asked as soon as the doctor entered his sitting-room.

Abraham Simpson did not answer at once. He took the piece of carboard which was handed to him.

“Oh yes!” he said simply, after a while.

“It’s a shameful thing, isn’t it?”

“Why! certainly not.”

But Simpson’s face had turned pale. Bernard watched him eagerly.

“How can you say that it is not a shameful thing, old man?”

“Because it is not! The interests of Science excuse it.”

“Do they?”

“They do.”

“DO THEY?”

“THEY DO!”

“Are you then in any way connected with that scheme?”

Abraham sat still in an armchair and lit a cigar.

“How did you know about this?” he inquired, in lieu of an answer.

“*I have dreamt of inverted gas mantles!*”

Abraham's pallor was turning to a green shade. Bernard laughed.

"I want to know," he went on, "if you are connected with that business."

"Yes."

Abraham spoke calmly.

"All right. I want to see. When shall we go?"

"Next Monday. But mind you, Bernard, my friend, you shall never come out of it alive."

Bernard whistled a patriotic song.

III

WHEN on the following Tuesday morning the secretary came to Dr. Simpson's bedroom with the morning mail, he saw that the room was empty. He did not seem to be disturbed in the least by that discovery, but went carefully through all the drawers, and only when he had made sure that they contained nothing which could strike the most careful of detectives the secretary left the room. He gave the orders as if they emanated from his chief, received with apparent anxiety the news of Bernard's disappearance, and summoned the French chauffeur.

"Henry," he said, "have the motor ready in half an hour."

Thirty minutes later the electric motor passed through the gates on its way to Scotland Yard.

IV

THE detective in charge of the case was offered a seat in the motor car and was soon within the walls of Dr. Simpson's establishment. There he was left awhile to his syllogistic deductions, and the secretary went straight to a wooden outhouse of which he alone besides his chief possessed a key. He stayed there about five minutes, and on returning summoned again the French chauffeur.

"Henry," he said, "the aeroplane must be sent at once to the address written on the labels which I have just fixed on the two boxes. Here are the forms filled up: go to town with the boxes."

It happened that the detective emerged from behind one of the cottages just as the chauffeur and the secretary were taking out of the building two long boxes of strong deal. The secretary repressed an oath and turned smiling towards the inspector.

"Strange shape," said the latter, with an unconcerned gesture.

"Yes; aren't they? It's Dr. Simpson's aeroplane." He lowered his voice as if speaking in confidence, adding:

"You see, I had orders with regard to some repairs being necessary, and in spite of the unexplained absence

of my chief I think it my duty to carry them out. We are sending the machine to the French firm which made it."

"Quite so! How strange that the doctor did not make use of his aeroplane, eh?"

"Not at all. There is evidently some mystery connected with the disappearance of our chief, and the starting of his aeroplane could not have happened without my being aware of it. Besides, as I have told you already, it is quite plain that Doctor Simpson has been killed or kidnapped by our missing patient. Any other supposition would be ridiculous and lead to a waste of time. Would you like to see the rooms which the Doctor occupied? I suppose you have already visited Bernard's cottage?"

"Yes, I have."

Inspector Carry looked perfectly bored. To the secretary he appeared an inexperienced clue seeker and a none-too-wise reader of modern detective stories. Nevertheless, he thought it necessary to show some regard.

"Found anything?"

"Faugh! perhaps. But isn't this a lovely place! When I am too old to do any work, I think I shall ask Dr. Simpson to take me among his patients."

"Do you really think that he is still alive?"

"Oh yes, very much so. But I should like to see his rooms, as you kindly suggested. By the way, who keeps the accounts of this establishment?"

"I do."

"Yes, of course. Well, would you mind telling me

how much a year Dr. Simpson spends in inverted gas mantles?"

"I'll show you the books, if you like," the secretary answered; but he was evidently taken aback.

"Please; but there is plenty of time for that."

And the two men ascended the steps of the central building. Entering the rooms, the inspector glanced round, and a broad smile came over his face. "I thought so," he muttered, then addressed his companion.

"I shall have to study this place; I am certain your duties command your presence elsewhere. . . . As for me, I shall stay here for an hour or so. . . ."

"Do you wish me to leave you?"

"I should be most happy in your company . . . at any other time. Will you please give orders, so that I may not be disturbed. But first of all I must send a message to a confrère of mine, as I fear our case will take me longer than I thought at first. I heard you ordering your chauffeur to take these boxes; would you object to my giving him a telegram to send?"

"Certainly not; shall I give him your message?"

"Oh, don't trouble, please; I will go to him. Do not let me detain you."

Inspector Carry left his interlocutor and hastened towards the motor.

"I want you to send a wire for me. At what time will you arrive in town?"

"In half an hour, sir."

"That will do nicely."

Inspector Carry threw a swift glance at the boxes

which were already on top of the motor, and wrote a few hurried words in his notebook, tore the page, and placed it in an envelope, which he sealed and handed to the man. He then added a few words; the chauffeur nodded respectfully and started at full speed.

When Dr. Simpson's secretary peeped slyly through the keyhole into the room where the detective had been for over an hour, he saw the latter sleeping comfortably in an armchair, and he laughed to himself in derision. "Sherlock Holmes system!" he muttered, and went away.

But Inspector Carry was a wise man and his sleep was not due to any affectation. He knew everything which it was desirable for him to know, and having nothing better to do than wait for the confirmation of an almost certain intuition, he had taken advantage of the time at his disposal, unaware yet of the place in which he would the next night lay his head.

When he awoke, the detective left the room and strolled along the corridor, where he met the secretary, who handed him a telegram.

"Do you still want me to find Dr. Simpson?" he inquired placidly, after having read the contents.

"I thought this telegram would be some intimation that your services were needed elsewhere."

"Oh, no! I am at your disposal . . . if you want me."

"Certainly. You see, Dr. Simpson had foreseen the possible results of his death, of any illness, of an absence, or even of his disappearance, and as I become the responsible head of this establishment in any case, I

want to be shielded from every suspicion. The rich and well-known families who have here some of their members under treatment would certainly resent any publicity."

"Oh, you may feel quite safe on that subject. I know that you had nothing to do with the disappearance of your chief. The case is so simple that I am ashamed of having spent more than ten minutes in solving it. Read this telegram.

He handed the open telegram to the secretary, who read:

"BOXES CONTAIN OLD IRON."

"I am a dead man," the secretary exclaimed.

"Don't be a fool," said the detective, somewhat perplexed, seeing the sudden and utter collapse of his interlocutor.

"Ah! you don't know everything then; or else you would understand!"

"No; perhaps not . . . but I soon shall. I am certain that we can save you from whatever vengeance you may be afraid of. But of course we must know everything. It might take me some hours to arrive at the bottom of this affair: you can save my time by answering a few questions. And first of all, will you tell me as man to man when you came to the conclusion that Abraham Simpson was a criminal?"

"I have never dreamt of such a thing; the doctor is not a criminal!"

"Oh! yes, he is, though he may be insane as well. But never mind, what I want to know most is why he had Bernard sent to this asylum, or, to save you

another denial, when he became the lover of Bernard's wife?"

"How do you know this?"

"By your answer. It's my method. I thought that you were too cautious not to know all about the disappearance, and at the same time too straightforward for a man who knew the whole truth. You're an honest man and that's why you serve your master's designs better than a scoundrel would. You know that Simpson won the heart and soul of Bernard's wife, and you think that Bernard has persuaded your chief to follow him into some hidden place where his artistic temperament would lead him to suppress the man who had broken up his home. I have never seen Abraham Simpson, but I have logically come to certain conclusions which are diametrically opposed to your personal conviction."

Inspector Carry did not look in the least proud of his success, but to his interlocutor the placid face of the detective assumed an uncanny and mysterious aspect.

"What!" he exclaimed, "you know more than I do of this affair?"

"It's a compliment I pay you; and if I were not certain of this I should find myself under the obligation of asking you to accompany me to the nearest police station."

"I wish you would . . . but it's no use, I tell you; I'm a lost man. *They* will never forgive me, because they are sure to attribute your knowledge to a breach of trust on my part."

"We shall see that your life be in no danger. But indeed, if the case is such as to bring me in possession of all the proofs I need, I doubt if there will be any man left alive to work out whatever threat may have impressed your imagination. Besides, I think I have already told you that I know everything which need be known for the immediate moment. You are not persuaded. Well, listen.

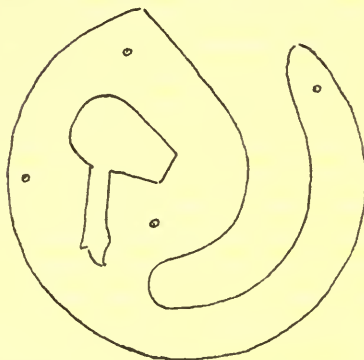
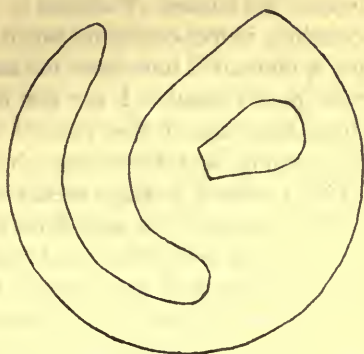
"Abraham Simpson is a very learned man, but at the same time a danger to humanity. I daresay he could give me two or three different scientific and obscure names for his particular mental state. One is sufficient for me: he is a maniac, a criminal insane maniac. Disposing of a very large fortune, utterly void of conscience, the slave of a passion for experimenting, he must have been living for years and years with one single desire; and only the pride or in some cases the greedy selfishness of some families helped him to realize his schemes. This for the purpose; details I can give you none, but this I know: he could never have succeeded without the implied consent of the families concerned. They were too glad to have some mental black sheep hidden in the shadow of this establishment to trouble much about the consequences of Simpson's treatment. They paid him well, and thought accordingly they would be well served.

"As for the means. He had some accomplices in some distant country, probably an island, and his downfall will be due to the fact that he has met his match in the person of Bernard. The two met some time ago, and Bernard understood at once the man Simpson

was. He simulated some sudden alteration of his personality and caught the alienist. Simpson thought he had found a capital subject, and, being utterly void of moral sentiment, started at once making love to the author's wife, very likely with the help of some sort of uncanny process. Anyhow, he succeeded, and completely mastered her personality. Bernard discovered their relations. It broke his heart, but he went on with his simulation. The pair managed to have him placed under the control of Simpson himself; he came to live here: discovered what he had been seeking, and obliged the scientific brute to take him where the experiments were going on. I hope, with or without your help, that we shall be there in time.

“Of course, Simpson's idea was to pursue his experiments on Bernard himself and then return here and start afresh on some other victim. He arranged things so that every one should believe that Bernard got him in a trap and himself afterwards disappeared. You had your orders, which you fulfilled; you were to see that the truth could not be got at, and then call in the Investigation Department. Well; I came, I saw, I discovered. Bernard had left a message which I found, and that is why I spoke to you about those gas mantles. A madman has queer ideas, and Simpson was wont to employ the brown card-board which supports some inverted mantles in their boxes as the means of carrying on his correspondence. You overlooked the fact that I might find this out, and it is just what has happened. I use the same mantles myself, and I know

something about cryptography. The rest was a child's game."



Inspector Carry handed the secretary a page torn out from his notebook.

"You see," he went on, "I have almost everything which is needed in order to follow your master. When I saw this little piece of cardboard it struck me as

being familiar, but I could not at first make out what it was. I lifted my eyes and saw that there was in the room an inverted gas burner. That was it. And yet there was something in that cardboard which I thought was out of place, unusual. I took down the mantle, and by putting the pieces together I saw that the central cavity had been extended. I then noticed the round holes, which certainly had been made by hand—I should say with a heated knitting needle—and, as I am pretty good at sketching, I soon drew the correct design in my notebook next to the exact reproduction of my find. Now, why that extra cavity, why those holes? Either the last occupant of the room had been spending his time in a childish amusement, or these alterations had a meaning. My question to you touching the inverted mantles brought an answer which led me to the certainty that you knew something about this, and I felt sure that this cardboard was used by someone within this asylum as the means of communicating with someone from the outside. An 'X' and 'Y' problem. Your trouble showed me that 'X' could be no one else than Dr. Simpson himself. As to 'Y,' it was a friend, an associate, or a partner of his. . . ."

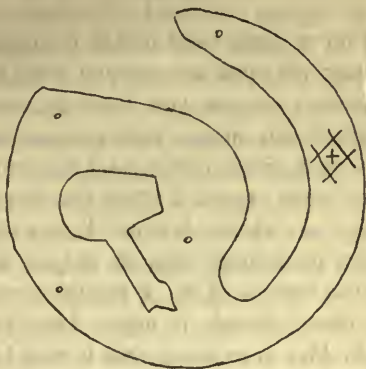
"Do you think that Dr. Simpson had left this clue?" interrupted the secretary, interested in spite of his emotion.

"Oh no! It was left for me, and your master was quite unaware of this compromising piece of evidence being left behind by Bernard."

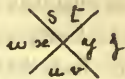
"So you attribute it to Bernard?"

"I do. Look at this sign slightly penned in a corner.

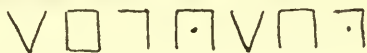
Why, it is one among the simplest of alphabets. You inscribe in each case two of the letters of the alphabet,



a b	c d	e f
g h	i j	k l
m n	o p	q r



and each case stands for the first letter inscribed in it; the same stands for the second with the addition of a spot. Thus '*Simpson*' reads



"If in the place of this



you make

use of any other design and divide it arbitrarily into thirteen cases of equal or unequal size, but necessarily of various shapes, you have obtained a new alphabet which can answer your purpose for a long time. As long a time, in fact, as it does not fall into the hands of some expert. I admit that the scheme of Dr. Simpson was clever, because it was *simple*, and hazard more than long research helped me to get quickly at the bottom of it. I should certainly have got there alone, though it might have been slow. Edgar Allen Poe once wrote that it may be roundly asserted that human ingenuity cannot concoct a cipher which human ingenuity cannot resolve. . . ."

The secretary was recovering from the first shock of fear and surprise, and the evident pleasure with which Inspector Carry was explaining his theories and making clear the fact that he had grasped a difficult problem called for no great sympathy from him. To his mind the detective was yet far from realizing the situation. He had an alphabet, but it appeared that he had found no ciphered correspondence to which he could apply his discovery. The secretary attempted in vain to hide his thoughts on the matter.

"I see," went on Inspector Carry, "that you believe my find to be useless. What, then, do you think of these documents?"

He took from his coat pocket a handful of curiously

shaped scraps of tissue paper. They were pressed together, but he put them flat in his hand.

"Here," he said, taking no apparent notice of the secretary's renewed marks of despair, "is sufficient evidence for me. Crushed together, these little bits of paper do not make the volume of a sparrow's egg. Once their meaning is understood, Dr. Simpson is found, brought to justice, and, I sincerely hope, safely hanged. Why did you not burn them?"

The secretary gave no answer. He could find no excuse to himself. His fault! It was all his fault; should his master revenge himself, he knew he had deserved it. Why had he gone to Scotland Yard before he was sure that no trace, no document whatever, could be found anywhere in the place?

And he began to face the one possibility of escaping his fate. The detective had put the papers back in his pocket and was now walking slowly towards a bench under the trees; he followed him. Inspector Carry smiled all to himself, and appeared to cast away all thoughts about the case. The moment had come to play for high stakes.

All of a sudden, without a word, the secretary jumped upon the detective. The two men fell together; Carry uttered a cry of pain as his wrist was brutally wrenched, and the papers were snatched from his pocket. He made an attempt at recovering them and succeeded only in exasperating his adversary, who gave him a heavy blow on the head. The man-who-knew-too-much fell on the ground and moved no more.

"He must be dead," thought the secretary, and he

realized his crime. But it was now too late to repent, and, lest some attendant might be attracted by the cry of the detective, it was necessary to place the body in some hidden place, see to the management of the asylum, and rush off to London in order to leave England and acquaint Dr. Simpson with the turn that events had taken.

He carried the body on his shoulders and put it down in the shed where the aeroplane was kept; he shut the door behind him and went up to the house. It took him some time before he had done with the young medical man whom he entrusted with the care of the asylum for an unlimited period.

"If the police come and order your patients to be transferred anywhere else, let them have their way," he said, "then write to me."

And he gave an address in Paris.

To all questions concerning Dr. Simpson's disappearance he remained mute, and, everything being settled, he returned to the shed.

The body of Inspector Carry was no more there. . . .

It was then that the secretary remembered that he had not taken from the detective the notebook in which many important particulars might have been.

He burned the little bits of paper snatched from the Inspector, and sat on the floor thinking over the situation.

V

WHILE the secretary thought, Inspector Carry was at work. He had guessed the thoughts of his interlocutor, and after a manner of his own had made himself "*rubber-like*," as some of his colleagues had it. He could feign unconsciousness and death in a highly realistic manner, and by a careful and persistent training of his muscles and nerves received terrific and stunning blows without much pain.

It was his idea to jump on and make a prisoner of the secretary when he should return to the shed, had not that worthy servant of a criminal master forgotten in his hurry to lay hands on his notebook. But he had omitted to do so, and there was accordingly a better chance for the detective in escape, and, anticipating activity, Carry opened the door with perfect ease and disappeared.

Two hours later he was closeted with his chiefs at Scotland Yard. A large map of Africa was spread out on the table; over the map was a small sheet of paper with designs and corresponding words and sentences, as worked out by the detective during his journey to London. Another man was consulting time-tables and taking notes for a journey.

When a final decision had been come to, telegrams were at once sent to various ports, and berths engaged on the Mozambique for "Mark Baxter, Esquire, and sister."

They were to join the ship at Durban, which port she was to leave for Mauritius. But they did not go so far. Intelligence received at head quarters after their passage, and communicated to them during their journey, caused them to hurry to Marseilles and board hastily a steamer sailing for Zanzibar.

On the first evening after her arrival on board, Miss Baxter made the acquaintance of a very attractive lady, who was introduced as Mrs. Bennett. They had a long and interesting conversation together, a dialogue made up of impressions, of gossipings,—a malignant tongue might have said they both tried their strength one against the other, as befits feminine nature.

Mrs. Bennett was travelling with a gentleman who attracted considerable attention from his fellow passengers. He seldom came to the dining-room; blue glasses protected his eyesight, and whenever he came on deck—which was not often, and then he sat silently by her side—the peculiar gait of his caused everyone to smile in spite of the pity which it naturally caused them to feel. It was a noisy, regular, aggressive claudication. It sounded exactly as if he were lame and unhappily possessed of a wooden leg. But he was not. When he sat and stretched his limbs, any one could see that both his legs were under an unconcerned control—that is, he could move one as well as the other, bend his knees, move his ankles, and all that with the

ease of a man who is not thinking of it. The sound was all the more noticeable.

However, the passengers were soon to forget the man. It happened on the day they entered the Red Sea. He ceased to come on deck. But Mrs. Bennett still came and mixed freely with her companions, though she was especially fond of Miss Baxter's company. They could both sit for hours together, clad in very light garments, lounging in perfect immobility during the hot hours. She explained the absence of her companion.

"He suffers from some unknown and apparently incurable disease," she told Miss Baxter. "No, he isn't any relation of mine, only a friend. We both go to Zanzibar, where my husband will meet us."

"We are going there too, my brother and I."

"Are you? I am so glad. We shall see more of each other, then, for I shall stay there a good while."

"We are unfortunately going further."

"Oh!"

"Yes, we shall leave Zanzibar on the 20th. We go to Lourenço Marques."

Mrs. Bennett repressed a movement of surprise. After a while, she retired to her cabin.

Mark Baxter took her deck chair and inquired eagerly:

"Well? How does she keep it up?"

"Cleverly!"

"I am not surprised. She is quite under his spell, and even at a distance he can influence her. Poor woman! Do you know, Carry, I think it is a great pity, a very great pity!"

"Baxter, you must not be sentimental. That woman is a perfect devil! If Simpson had not got hold of her, another scoundrel would have. Among the little party we are after, there are only two who deserve commiseration, two victims, Bernard and Simpson's secretary."

"What! after he nearly killed you!"

"Oh yes! That's all in the day's work. You know, Baxter, I think you are too sentimental for us. I asked them to let you come with me, because there is good stuff in you. You are clever, willing to learn, and you accept rebuffs with equanimity. But the sentiment! oh! the sentiment, Baxter!"

"I cannot help it, Carry. I believe in those feelings of mine. They are like instinct. . . . But, I say, has she confided in you?"

"You know what you promised me. I am to work alone, and you watch me. We shall both be in at the death and shall both have a rise, but *I* do the work. Be thankful for this opportunity, and don't ask questions. . . ."

Having left Miss Baxter, Mrs. Bennett went to one of those luxurious saloons which make a palace of the modern liner, and found the invalid alone.

"I cannot make her out," she said.

"What news?"

"They are going to Lourenço Marques."

"Oh!"

"We must give them the slip."

"Of course, but . . . confound my stupidity! Why did I not take his notebook?"

"Yes, why not? I guess Simpson will. . . ."

"You promised me your help."

"I know. But things are getting uncomfortably difficult. Who is that girl?"

"I have been to her cabin while you kept her on deck."

"Well?"

"I have found nothing. Nothing. Perfumes, powders, rouge, fine linen . . . almost too much of it."

"No letters?"

"Two. Silly sentimental letters from some lover. She is engaged to him, it appears. They are still in their envelopes—addressed to "Miss Baxter, c/o Cook & Sons, London."

"Envelopes, too. H'm. Well, I must find out. Have you that note with you?"

Without answering her, he handed her a small sheet of paper folded in four. He opened it and took what was inside the folds: a piece of cardboard with the shape and use of which the reader is now acquainted.

There was some writing on the white paper, and Mrs. Bennett compared it with a page of a tiny notebook hanging below her waist from a gold chain.

"Nothing to go by," she muttered, and gave back the cardboard and white paper.

"I am sick of it," said the man. "It is too hard on me. If Carry is on board, as the words '*with Inspector Carry's compliments*' seem to indicate, why does he not arrest me for attempted murder, and have done with it?"

And who the devil is that girl? I'd rather cheat the hangman and jump overboard than face that eternal danger."

"Simpson will make short work of him and of any one else who would attempt to intrude. You know it. Courage! You know, I think it was a mistake not to come up again. I shouldn't have taken any notice. Why did you not hand that to Miss Baxter and inquire whether it belonged to her?"

"Too late! I have waited two days now."

"Do you think the pigeons have reached '*Sheól*' yet? If so, we ought soon to see some proof of *His* magnificent powers."

"They may. I can place hope in no one."

Thus Fear and Hope worked their ways, and the parties present felt the necessity of hastening the end. They had passed Aden, and Mombasa was to be the next place of call. There was more hope in the heart of Mrs. Bennett's companion as the ship came nearer to that port; Carry and Baxter, on the other hand, were not free from a certain apprehension. Under the assumed personality of Miss Baxter, Inspector Carry worked his path into knowledge, and his thoughts upon the subject of Simpson's island, of Simpson's methods, of Simpson's tactics, were not as carelessly dismissed as they would have been by Baxter. He knew more than Baxter, and his courage was all the more estimable for being established on sound knowledge of all there was to be surmounted.

On the third evening after they had touched Aden, the invalid came on deck again. He eyed Baxter and his sister suspiciously, and, after a while, walked noisily towards them. It was the first time he had addressed any of his fellow passengers.

"I believe I saw you drop this from your pocket, sir," he said to Baxter.

It was Carry who answered.

"Oh! Thank you so much! It belongs to me."

"To you, Miss . . . er . . ."

"Baxter."

"Miss Baxter. I suppose I ought to apologize for my indiscretion; I unfolded it, and . . ."

"And you wonder what can that quaint piece of cardboard mean? Well, I found it on board, the first time I came on deck, and I thought it was so funny, because, you see, I know one Inspector Carry so well. I wonder if he is the man."

"Miss Baxter," said the invalid, beginning to lose his temper, "you are playing with me. Can you understand this?" He gave her a tiny scrap of tissue paper.

"Oh yes! Wait one minute, will you?"

He examined the paper during a few seconds and gave it back to him.

"*'Let them come!'* That is the meaning of this cipher," said the voice of Inspector Carry.

The sudden change of tone startled Baxter. It left the invalid thunderstruck.

"So, it's you!" he cried.

"It is I," said Carry, simply. "I wish you to believe

that I have no grudge against you, no order for your arrest, and that I urge you, once more, to confide in us."

"Too late! Simpson will join Mrs. Bennett and me at Mombasa."

"Bernard's wife, you mean."

"If you like."

"Why don't you congratulate me? Does Miss Baxter fail in gaining your approval?"

"I wish you'd arrest me, and have done with it."

Miss Baxter turned round and saw Mrs. Bennett approaching.

"I won't do that," she said slowly. "But one thing I shall do, and it will mean the public exposure of this woman, and her arrest before her arrival at Mombasa, if she does so much as suspect who I am. I leave it to you whether it is worth your while to tell her or the man you are going to meet. I must remain Miss Baxter. Besides, you know what Simpson would say!"

"Oh no! not that!" exclaimed the secretary.

"Right," and, turning to her brother, "Baxter, you wanted to be sentimental, my boy. So be it! Let your sentiments carry you."

"I shall be careful," answered Baxter.

"Oh! there is no need!"

And the Inspector smiled broadly as Bernard's wife joined them.

VI

MRS. BENNETT'S glance ran from Miss Baxter to her own companion, but failed to understand either the former's merriment or the latter's expression of perplexed uneasiness.

Miss Baxter relieved the tension of her brains.

"Your friend," she said, "has brought me back something which I had lost. I suppose he showed it to you when he found it."

And in her palm she had the brown cardboard.

"What! was it yours? But . . . I thought . . ."

"That I should be the last person on board to whom it should belong. Well, I am; but you see I found it."

"You . . . found it."

Mrs. Bennett felt that the world was going round again. She had known fear. Carry answered:

"Yes, on deck, a few days ago. And it is rather remarkable, because, as I was just telling your friend, we know *one* Inspector Carry very well indeed. Mark, my brother, considers him a very clever man. If he were not going round this continent for my sake, by journeys independent of time-tables, I am sure he would leave anything in order to smoke a pipe in Mr. Carry's rooms, discussing some entangled mystery."

For the second time Mrs. Bennett thought the world had come to a standstill. She was not so sure that Miss Baxter was not playing with her. Mark's sister went on.

"My first impression was that Mr. Carry was on board. But this could hardly be possible, because Mark went to see him just before we left England, and the poor man was in a rather bad condition."

The secretary was pale. Mrs. Bennett thought that his uneasiness was due to the remembrance of the cause of Inspector Carry's *bad condition*. She asked:

"Was he ill?"

"Not exactly. He had been attacked and badly bruised by some fool. So he said to my brother. But Mark can tell you more about it, if you care. Do you know Mr. Carry?"

"I have not the honour." Mrs. Bennett attempted a smile. "How interesting," she went on, "that find of yours. There must be some romance on board this ship, some intrigue carried on while we dream only of the calm and quiet horizons."

The secretary passed behind Mrs. Bennett, and, obeying a glance of Miss Baxter, approached her. Baxter took his opportunity, and answered gaily, in the place of his chief.

"How curious! I had just been wondering in exactly the same mood. There must be a romance, you know. Now, when I crossed last from New York to Liverpool, there were on board . . ."

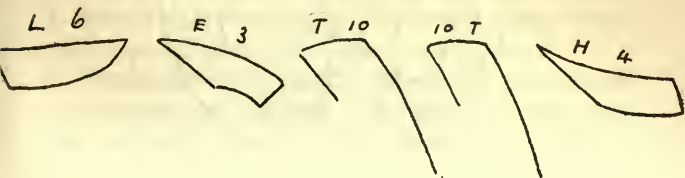
The end of the sentence was lost to all but Mrs. Bennett. Carry had taken the man for a stroll, in a

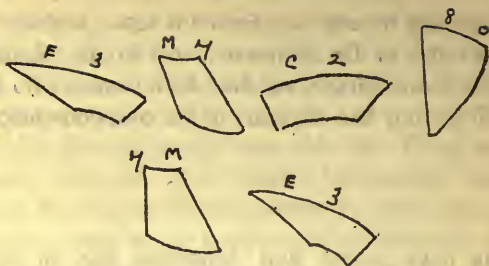
final attempt to save him from his fate. But was not the secretary of Dr. Simpson a tool in the hands of his chief, and closely watched by a woman who had herself entirely lost direction of her own conscience?

The days passed and Mombasa was in sight. Inspector Carry had obtained an absolute promise of silence from the secretary, and had, in the meanwhile, enjoyed himself immensely.

Mrs. Bennett had flirted with Mark Baxter, had desired and obtained from Mark's sister an explanation of some curious ciphers which she had seen in her possession. She had afterwards conferred with her companion, but the result of their conference was an attitude more friendly than ever between the two pairs. In order to satisfy those who might be interested in cryptography, let us glance over Miss Baxter's shoulders as she explains to Mrs. Bennett how to read the following signs handed to her by the secretary.

"For simplicity, let us put the sentence in corresponding numbers. We have the following signs:





They give us:

6310.10437.2873

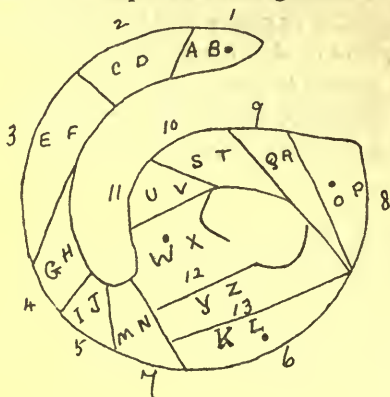
representing the cases of the key I am now sketching

a	b	c	d	e	f
g	h	i	j	k	l
m	n	o	p	q	r



here, which is the standard key of this particular class of cryptograms. Knowing that

the signs correspond to parts of this piece of brown cardboard, we can divide it into thirteen parts equal or unequal. The shape of our designs will help us. If



we superimpose each of them to the part of this cardboard, to which it is similar, our task is done. See, this one fits here, this other on the corner.

"This is what I had done when I gave you the solution. The sentence was: 'Let them come,' or, according to numbers: 6310.10437.2873. Every letter was in its place, with the exception of K.L. having been exchanged with M.N."

"What of the spots, or holes, in some of the designs?" inquired Mrs. Bennett. She spoke as if she knew, and she very likely did.

"They have a meaning of their own, though I don't know it," carelessly replied Miss Baxter. "As this extra large one conveys the idea of some future achievement, some dreamed-of goal. . . ."

Mrs. Bennett repressed a movement of her lips. She thought "goal" very near "Sheôl." Of course, Miss Baxter knew. If she knew, she was after the secretary and Simpson. Was she a woman detective? How could she be, having that silly sentimental ass, her brother, with her on board? A man? Impossible. Mrs. Bennett had not seen much of the world before she fell in love with Simpson, but she could not be deceived by a man under feminine disguise.

What if she was deceived? Did Simpson's secretary know? Why was he more and more gloomy as the ship approached Mombasa?

And she took him apart an hour later. She did her best to find out, but with what result we cannot say. Did he keep his promise? Or did he penetrate deeper into the path he had chosen on the day of Inspector Carry's visit?

VII

MOMBASA! They remained there for three days, and, contrary to all expectations, nobody came on board, with the exception of some officials; no mail of any importance was handed to our friends, and the ship left in due time for Zanzibar and ultimately Mozambique. Carry showed no surprise, but a feeling of unrest came over him. He preferred an enemy who came out of the darkness. Mrs. Bennett and her companion were disappointed, yet hopeful.

Zanzibar! Nobody came on board. No one save a little negro, the son of some chief, returning to his country, *via* Mozambique. He was accompanied by an ugly, clever, strong, but rather tame-looking monkey. Both Baxter and Carry turned round the pair, and the result of their close investigation was that the negro was a negro and the monkey an orang-outang. No suspicion of Simpson.

On the third day after their departure from Zanzibar, the expected event happened, but in a most unexpected manner. The near presence of Simpson was felt.

The ship was speeding in the high sea when, above her, amid a cloud of gigantic birds attracted by the novelty, an aeroplane hovered. All the passengers gathered on deck, the monkey being the one who showed the most visible signs of interest.

The aeroplane came down, lower and lower, until her passengers were able to see its rope hanging a few yards over the waves. The monkey began to grunt horribly, and suddenly leaped towards Mrs. Bennett and caught her in its long arms. With its burden, it threw itself into the sea, and before any one could interfere had caught the rope and was ascending towards the aeroplane. The negro appeared unconcerned.

"My turn," thought the secretary. He was far from being calm, and a struggle was evidently pulling his brain in opposite directions. Just as he was preparing to follow the animal, Carry caught his arm.

"One minute, please," said he. "I wish you to stay with us. It is but a little delay, as Baxter and I intend to reach the island."

"What island?"

"Oh, you know very well what I mean! Sheôl Island. We are going to pass it by."

A small island was now in sight. The man in the aeroplane had evidently no intention of waiting any longer, for they were now speeding towards the land.

Carry went down to his cabin. When he came up again, he had discarded his woman's attire. Holding a handbag, he walked towards the captain and said a few words to him.

A boat was lowered, and, pushing the secretary before him, Carry went down, followed by Baxter. It must have been a pre-arranged business, for the ship took to high speed again, and the three men were left to struggle against the ocean.

VIII

A WOMAN and a man sat in the verandah of an attractive building overlooking the sea. The woman was making love to the man, who seemed to bear the marks of her affection with equanimity.

"Oh! you are so great, so strong, Abraham," she said. "And I love you more than any woman in the whole world can love any man. You are my all, and my life, and my death. Think of what I have done for you."

"Yes, dear," Simpson answered, with an attempt at kindness. "I know. By the way, won't you see your husband?"

"What is he to me, now that you have taught me what love is?"

"Well, I promised him that he should see you. I had to cage him, in order that my 'Smart Set' should not kill him."

The woman looked up. "Why didn't you let them do it?" said she.

There was no cruelty in her tone, merely love for another man. Suddenly, she thought of the man and the woman on board, and a great fear came over her for her hero.

"They will be here presently," she exclaimed.

"Who? My men?"

"No, your secretary, and Mr. Baxter with his sister."

"His sister! Really, I thought you more clever. Why, it's Carry himself!"

"Oh!"

The woman was more than shocked, and, from her surprise, we can realize how strictly the secretary had kept his word.

"Let them come," said Simpson. "I cannot fear two men."

"Cannot they send a warship?"

"They *have* tried to obtain that. I saw the conference through my gazing crystal. That was long ago, on the very day you left England. The Government was a Liberal Government. Is not that enough? No, no! I tell you, my experiments and my entertainments will be carried on upon the same principles for a long time to come, and we shall merely add two big brains to our collection."

"Are you sure of your safety? Oh! darling, be careful."

"I tell you there is not a shadow of danger. Here comes the boat and the three passengers. Let them come! As for any more enemies, look at this crystal. Is not its heart clear?"

And he himself threw a glance at it. Something he saw struck his attention. Without letting the woman approach, he fixed it intently, looking, looking. . . .

Carry, Baxter and the secretary were ashore, ascending towards the house. Simpson lifted his eyes.

"God damn you!" he cried, roused to a paroxysm of passion; and he jumped at Carry's throat.

The woman screamed, running from one man to the other, and shouting the name of the man she loved.

A sharp whistle was heard in the distance, coming from the sea. Simpson drew back.

"His Majesty's Warship," Carry said calmly. "You have ten minutes in which to bid good-bye to this island."

The Inspector was very calm. He knew that after a first refusal, the protection of a warship had been promised. Simpson had been too busy of late to gaze through his magic glass. When he had done so, it was too late. But the Doctor was a man of many ideas, and, if the game was up, he had at least a little time during which he could show what sort of man he was.

Walking to the house, he pressed a button on the wall.

Two minutes after, from all sides, men and women were running up to him and placing themselves in a row.

Simpson called the detective to his side.

"You think you've beaten me, eh? Wait until the end. But I must admit you played the game. Your reward will be a glance within my soul. Come, let's look at our friends."

The woman had taken hold of his coat and was begging him for a word of kindness.

"Get her away," Simpson said, and two men seized

her and carried her to the cage in which her husband was waiting.

Meanwhile the Doctor was introducing his guests.

"The Honourable Edgar Allen Rawlinson, third son of the Fifth Earl of Midhurst."

The man thus introduced smiled broadly, and before the eyes of Carry and Baxter went down on all fours and licked the sand.

"The Reverend Thomas Bertram Jones."

The divine coughed, grunted, and began gravely to empty his pockets, scattering an extraordinary mixture of useless and unclean articles.

And in succession they were all introduced to the detectives; men and women belonging to families respected in the land, whom their relatives believed to have died at Dr. Simpson's asylum, and who were alive, kept on that island for the purpose of serving the manias of a horrid and degenerate tormentor.

Carry and his friend felt ashamed of their country. They could not understand how such poor, mentally deficient creatures had been left to the mercy of Simpson, how their relatives could have been so base and mean as to let them have anything but the very best and safest refuge which their deficiencies necessitated.

Simpson rubbed his hands.

"What do you think of my menagerie?" he said.

Before Carry could answer, a warship was seen to approach at full speed making signals, while her cannon spoke.

Doctor Simpson called one of his servants and his

wireless apparatus began to transmit a message. The warship answered and slackened speed.

"I'll blow up the island, sir," said the alienist.

"Oh no! you won't," Carry retorted. "My friend will see to that."

Baxter had approached and disarmed a man who stood close by with a revolver, ready to obey his master's orders.

Simpson appeared quite unconcerned.

"After all," he said, "do as you like; it will give them something to talk about. . . . Send up the white flag," he shouted.

And he smiled, while his surrender was acknowledged from the warship and a boat sent out.

"Mr. Carry, I'll show you something first. There is time." Simpson went on.

He stood facing the line of his unwilling guests and commanded their attention. They all fixed his eyes, and, on a gesture of his arm, marched in a line towards the shore, laughing aloud like a band of madmen. They were sixteen altogether, including four ladies.

On coming to the shore, they stopped; Simpson had followed them and gave now another order.

Slowly they entered the water and began a joyful song.

The waves were furious, but they did not even attempt to draw back. They swam towards the approaching boat and one after the other disappeared, absorbed by the merciful ocean.

Carry ran to the shore and shouted to Simpson.

"Call them back, you scoundrel!"

The doctor was laughing hysterically.

"Look at them!" he screamed. "Look at them! Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha! . . . The whole lot! The whole damned lot! ha, ha!"

Carry threw him on the sand and held him down. The boat landed and Simpson was made a prisoner. . . .

The sea never gave up any of the corpses. Simpson died on board, before a deserved judgment could send him into the air, swinging. . . .

Neither Mrs. Bennett nor the secretary could have been made to pay for him—who had led them. They lived to be interviewed, the former to be divorced, the latter to be married to a romantic American lady, both to suffer.

Why Sheôl island was Sheôl island, and what man Simpson was—we publish his own confession to enlighten the reader. It has been in its time the talk of two continents.

IX

FRAGMENTS OF DR. SIMPSON'S AUTO-
BIOGRAPHY

I WAS born self-willed and a lover of my freedom, and my one desire in youth was to retain my freedom and the thorough use of my free will. This is the cause of my present hatred of humanity. I developed ideas and opinions of my own, and when the time came for me to carry them out, any obstacle was but a stronger inducement to me.

My father died ere I could know him, and, whatever came to be the verdict of the jury, I feel certain that my mother was the indirect—maybe direct, cause of his death. However, death is but a birth, and he must have been happier, wherever he was, than in the company of his wife. She was a highly intellectual woman, who took her pleasures in a dignified manner. She never laughed, she was too great; she smiled.

My earliest recollection of her is about grasshoppers. I was looking at some fine specimens in our garden and the nurse was out for the day, and my mother came to me and showed me how to pull the small legs out of them. Her lips were pressed together and her eyes twinkled as the little insect jumped away, minus one

leg. "It'll grow again, you know," she said to me. And she bade me eat one of the little legs. I have never since tasted anything like it.

However, in spite of my mother I was to learn something of life. Once I tried the same game with a cat and got painfully scratched. That incident taught me much. From that day I was a philosopher.

I was only fourteen when I told my mother that I wanted to become a surgeon. "Bless you," she said, "how beautiful! how happy you will be. I wish I were a surgeon. . . ."

She died before I had become one; or else she might have died earlier. But this is neither here nor there, and her death was of very little consequence to the world and to me. I worked hard, learned much, and succeeded fairly well in my examinations.

Of course I had money, and it enabled me to travel and to take degrees in Austria and France. At the age of thirty, I asserted myself as a specialist of mental cases, and published some books on the question, written for me by some poor students in the peace of the Reading Room of the British Museum. . . .

* * * * *

I had reached the age of two-and-forty when I decided to make use of my knowledge of the world, not in order to build up a fortune, like a Yankee, but rather to enable myself to carry out certain experiments of my own. Experiments entirely purposeless, in so far as Science is concerned. But experiments of great importance to me, as they were destined to

satisfy a passion aroused within me by the remembrance of my early days.

Many noble families had consulted me. It is not infrequent to find among the children of high birth a fair quantity of degenerates; though, as a rule, I am ready to appreciate the qualities due to a good pedigree. These children grew and had to be put under the supervision of some specialist. It came to be *my* speciality to take such men and women in my private asylum, together with other cases thought by me to be worth the trouble of being studied.

But my experiments began at first with my dead guests, that is, with the legally dead, for I managed to keep them very much alive, long after the family had received their ashes. I used my aeroplane for that purpose.

I had found a little island, entirely deserted, off the African coast, about a hundred miles from Mombasa, and there I settled my colony. It is an easy thing to find men ready for any task in exchange for a good salary, and, where men failed me, I made use of monkeys, which I imported myself and trained patiently. All the modern inventions I made use of. Money was of no consideration. I was master and god of Sheôl Island.

My confidential men looked after the cases in hand, while I carried on my duties, but I never failed to visit the place two or three times each year. In the intervals, we had news from one another by means of a very simple device, based on some sort of cryptography.

I cured men and women of madness. Actually cured them. Simply by removing parts of their brains. But also I made slaves of them all. I could make a genius of any imbecile. Of a genius as of an imbecile I made servants. I caused them to *want to serve me*.

But I was longing for a chance to make the experiment in the opposite way and in the wife of a certain novelist I saw the possible instrument. Through her I secured her husband. . . . He came to be the obstacle in my way, the stone over which I was to fall. He was sane, and he obtained possession of my secrets by induction before I could operate on him.

I took him to Sheôl, and all would have been well, but for the carelessness of my secretary and the stubbornness of a certain detective whom I hope to repay one day for his troubles—and for mine. I had to cage my novelist. Through excitement and excusable pre-occupation, my hand was shaking as I threw his brain open to my work. And I failed in the operation. . . .

* * * * *

But the greatest of my secrets will disappear with me. How to get the soul out of a man, how to retain it near him, in his neighbourhood, yet away from him—that is what I have done; that is what will be done again some day, by some one. Soul and body—two different elements, two antagonistic natures, united only by the soul's messenger, the fluid of life, the second soul.

I obtained such results, and I have no wish for anything more in life. I may die, or seem to have died; I

have satisfied my one craving. Tears and sweat and blood I saw rolling down the cheeks of men—by Typhon, what a grand spectacle! What a joy! My heart I thought would break at times, through sheer excitement. Oh! the joy of looking upon human pangs of agony! . . .

* * * * *

I have taken and received too much from life to be strongly attached to it.

And I shall die when my hour comes. And I shall live again!

THE SON OF MONSIEUR
BISTOURI

To
Leonard Sisman

THE SON OF MONSIEUR BISTOURI

MONSIEUR le docteur Bistouri was a great surgeon and a scientist, and his name—cursed though it was by the nurses—was thrice holy in the eyes of the undertakers!

He was a self-made man and it pleased him to recall the way in which he had begun his career. At the age of thirteen he had learnt Latin of his own accord from some old missals which the curé of his village had lent him, and in spite of the fact that his brain was too nimble to accept religious dogmas, he had no scruples in accepting the gratuitous help of the Roman Catholic priests. When the time arrived for him to enter the seminary he made himself scarce, and tried for an exhibition at one of the state schools. Hard work added to a good memory gave him his reward. Then, year after year, success followed on success, and, after walking the hospitals, he became a full-blown surgeon.

He was a specialist in the ills of the stomach. Indeed, he had them at his fingers' ends! Dainty little guineapigs, harmless rabbits, and lazy-eyed dogs were

sacrificed by the score to his need for experiment. One day he believed he had at last discovered the great secret which was to make his name. He set to work on forty-five rabbits, eighteen white mice, and a hundred sparrows, and, finally, on a monkey and an old woman who had come under his treatment in the hospital for a cancer cure. His experiments were quite convincing. All the victims died within the twenty-four hours as he had predicted. Then he began operating afresh on another batch, immediately putting them under special treatment. Except for the monkey, which was then found to have been tuberculous, all the victims of the counter proof recovered, although the old woman complained of terrible pains. However, since neither the sparrows nor the rabbits nor the white mice complained, the old woman was undoubtedly out of her mind.

Immediately Monsieur Bistouri became king of surgeons. He had not only invented a disease, but simultaneously he had discovered a remedy. The government gave him the Legion of Honour and a pension. The next thing was to found a dynasty. He would marry. So he chose out a young, wealthy girl, of good family, strong and healthy as far as he could judge from appearances, and began to make love to her. He played his part well, even to becoming a bashful lover, and, since the girl believed in his love, the marriage knot was soon tied. She must have been blind to care for this man, soulless and heartless as he was. But she loved him.

* * * * *

In less than a year Madame Bistouri was about to become a mother. The great surgeon was overwhelmed with joy.

"A son," he would say, "Oh, certainly! I shall have a son, and I myself shall be able to shape his mind; I myself shall prepare him for his life-work. He shall be the vivisectionist of the future, the greatest surgeon in the world."

A well-known doctor—an experienced accoucheur—was sent for, since, contrary to expectation, the birth was evidently going to be difficult. The great surgeon waited in a neighbouring room, trembling with anxiety.

Suddenly the doctor came out to him and, seizing him by the hands, cried,—

"Courage, my friend!"

"Why, what is happening?"

"We could save the child with difficulty, but the mother would sink under it."

"What of that! Save the child! Save the child, I tell you!"

And, mad with anger, the great surgeon stamped his foot and began pacing up and down the room.

* * * * *

After the burial of the mother, Monsieur Bistouri's first word was an inquiry for his son.

And then he learnt the truth. The son of Doctor Bistouri was blind, and on his right cheek was a birth-mark—a hideous blood-stain. The great surgeon was the next day taken to a lunatic asylum.

WHAT I DID WITH MY
MILLION

To
George Cecil Jones

WHAT I DID WITH MY MILLION

I.

ON the second day of the second week of the second month of the second year after I had drowned the last puppies of Diana, I, a true descendent of Karicatopoulos, the Greek, became translated, and went into another part of the Universe.

Albeit I had, but a few days past, inherited a sum of money which you may consider excessive for the needs of any sane human representative, about a million or so, a lot of 000's in a row, looking rather whitewashed on paper, I must say that the one event had absolutely nothing to do with the other; believe it, nothing at all—else you disoblige me, and, by Hercules, I'd make a present of you to old Charon.

Of course, I went quite uninvited on my journey. Nobody said to me: Karicatopoulos, old fellow, come along; we have nothing to offer you, but to that which we have you are welcome. Oh dear no! Neither was it a—er—a sort of—er—imaginary voyage. I was not drenched in cups. Never, upon my honour. It was not, at least I think so, any of your blithering Anæsthetics, although they are beastly enough. I just went there—that's all. "To the feasts of the gods, the devils (and I) come uninvited," as Plato did not say. Not that I

am in any way clever, but, don't you know, there is no man so goodly, that is well-thought-of, that is silly, that is an ass, whom the Devil, His Imperial and Royal Majesty Satan, the Snake-Immortal, cannot inspire with some of his own Kadosh fire, and to whom he cannot give (at a minute's notice) cleverness, of a kind; wit, of sorts; intellect, so to speak; even common sense, as it were.

I became a millionaire in a hurry and I went away in a similar manner, to use one of So-so Bill's expressions. I went away a good man. I did not return in the same disposition.

Now, to be good is to be half something. To know good and evil (as they are humanly described, aha!) is to be a god. To practise both, sshsss! That's the whole scheme and aim of the Universe explained.

I saw that my first step was to decide who would help me to make the best use of my million. There was a man, sitting on a throne of pine-wood (pine is good for the lungs). I was he. The throne was slowly ascending towards a topless, endless, perpendicular tunnel. Twenty niggers and five English girls were dancing alternatively before me, not a toe dance, but a dance of Sylphs, in the air. Damme, they were sweet; how I wished I had been a Kiss-book!

On and on and on we went! They danced and smiled, and the blackies grinned like apes, and the feeling that I was to ascend eternally gave me indigestion. It was a sort of an idea of a hint, I suppose, and I, as I knew, being now a god, had only to wish to see the wish realized. Mine was.

We stopped. The girls were absorbed into the aether and the negroes fell down, being no more under the influence of my ascending attraction.

There was a ball-room and I was alone in it. I frowned mentally, hating solitude. Then the four doctors came in, all M.D.'s, but not merry devils.

II

“SIT down, . . . er, gentlemen four,” said I, “and say with me: ‘A Millionaire I am!’ No, not like that. Listen. Mmmillllionnnairre!”

“Mmm . . . ,” well, they said it.

“Liars!” I said to them. “Double-breasted liars! But I like you, I am rather keen on you, all four. I wish to give you a treat. Let there be here a bioscope show and let us see what is now in my mind. Then I shall, Sphinx-like, put to you the question, and the best man will win my scholarship! Hi, ih, hih! my scholarship! Damn you! Save you! A handful of gold and the prerogative to help me in the Gargantuan task of putting my million to the very best use possible—that for the winner, gentlemen all, or so I think. To the losers I will offer a swift punishment. They shall be “geschlagen und geplagt”; enough to give them St. Vitus’s dance; comprenez-vous?

The bioscope show began as I wished. My voice expressed my ideas as well as the moving and scintillating pictures, and the four doctors were worth watching.

“This, my worthy fellows, represents to you a torment of my invention, which I recommend to your profession. I do you the great honour of laying my heart completely bare before you. The waste of Nature

is amazing. Nature is very foolish—or very wise. Well, is it not the fashion to come nearer to Nature nowadays? Therefore I follow her.”

Ah! hah! My speech was so thrilling, entrancing, enrapturing, that it preoccupied all interest of these fellows in the show.

But then the show came.

“This, my worthy fellows, represents to you a torment of my invention. The square open box which you see is painted white because it shows better the results to which we come. This man standing by, looking like a rabbit of large proportions, is a creature of mine. Follow the process. The five boards which form the box are gradually disjointed, by the slow revolving of this wheel here, to the left. Now count. One, two, three, four, until you come to twenty-two. The box looks exactly as if it were not a box any longer. Look out. Our man steps in the middle, lies flat on his back. He is going to die—just because he is going to. Nature and I are spendthrifts, you know, doctors. Do you notice how the boards are gradually being moved by the action of the wheel and of the cords? Count again. Seven, eight, nine. At twenty, stop to breathe a little. Twenty-one now. Our man is almost suffocated, and his legs and arms doubtless are broken. His skull, too, I should think. The box is a box again.

“Twenty-two. Everything is in its place. The big man fits well, thoroughly hashed and mashed in the small box, small but very stout. Oh! the mechanism is perfect! Look, it is open again. How fine, eh?

"The second tableau is not quite original. These two bells you see are tuned. Hear the gramophone. Now the hammer of bell number one is removed and a second creature is taking its place, feet up and head hanging lower than the edge—so that we can hear his cries. But he must cry in tune, or else he shall stay there. It requires great skill from the man who pulls the ropes of that bell, and a strong musical instinct in the hanged man. He has to keep in tune with the other bell, in spite of whatever painful feelings are caused in his gourdly legs by the peculiar movements and shocks to which he is submitted."

Many other torments I showed to the four doctors, watching the expression of their faces all the while. I had no doubt but that it was a real torture to them to watch the performance. One of them alone smiled imperturbably. He must have had an idea that I was pulling his leg. That smile of his was no sufficient indication to me, however, and I decided upon one more test of my men. I wished for a change, and the scene at once became different.

Again I was lifted up in the endless tunnel, again the five beauties appeared, but were now pushing one another in order to be nearer me. One sat on my knees, two on my shoulders, and one hung on my lips. The fifth had, by some vague process, entered my head; and was looking at me, from inside, through my own eyes.

The negroes were singing to the doctors and pushing them after me. Suddenly we stopped again. This time the sweet females remained with me and sat, in

various attitudes, on the langsettle by me. Then the competition began. There were four bags, exactly alike, before me, and I ordered the doctors to choose one each.

They looked so canny that one of the girls laughed, and, laughing, swung herself to and fro like a little lizard. Her eyes were beating and flying like birds.

The four men drew lots. The first who opened his bag found it full of gold and bade me a pleasant journey. The negroes kicked him. He went away. The second found his full of emptiness, and he likewise departed. The third had dead rats in his, and he stayed. The fourth could not open his bag, or would not, and by that sign he won. The rats-man I, myself, kicked away. Then, having found my man, and without losing sight of my scarlet women, I took the second step towards disposing of my million. I dismissed the negroes and left the show.

III

YOU will have noticed by now that there is in me a certain shyness, coyness, bashfulness, such as affects kine in a field when the bull takes his constitutional, which prevents me from hurrying in any way. It seems as if I dreaded to come to the point. That million has been a cause of perspiration to me, a perpetual worry. I took myself back to this world with my women and one physician in attendance.

We travelled a good bit, you know, and the girls wanted a lot of things, which I had to procure, although it would have been impossible for me to forget the purpose of my life. I had a mission to fulfil in spite of them. Sweet Greece was to see me no more, but all the world was now open to Karicatopoulos.

Now, what is the most important and urgent need of our race? You know it not, eh! As the French have it, *vous donnez votre langue au chat*. Well, I can tell you. It is the knowledge of good and evil, and its corollaries; the discovery of a new *cornucopia*, and a thorough acquaintance with the art of pleasure.

The cornucopia, wonderful cup of plenty, horn of satisfaction, cannot be put to its very best and most thorough use without the art and the science of Pleasure.

Plainly, with my million, I was born to teach the World. The scarlet women of my heart were there to set the fashion, and the doctor to help me to find the elixir of perpetual health. We were to stand against Nature and take advantage of her wasting capacities.

Drinking and loving, ever young and beautiful, we went from town to town, lecturing, and preaching by our example the new code of moralities. People flocked to hear and see us. I had every reason to expect the new era. Governments were already shaking upon their bases; priesthood had become a new and sacred office. I and my disciples were bringing the gospel of Joy and Pleasure to the remotest corners of the World.

Alas! Alas! Dresses and Jewelry cost much. The doctor was a gold-thirsty leech. My new disciples were all poor and the million was melting away. We charged fees, but fees were seldom paid. People found in themselves that the Tree of happy living had roots in all hearts, and that my teaching was unnecessary. And, one fine evening, I became translated once more into another world. This time, it was none of my doing.

A carriage and pair, just after my evening walk abroad, stopped before my door. Two strong, healthy looking individuals very politely requested my presence within the vehicle. . . .

Now, I think, I live in a country house, but I have not quite made up my mind whether I am a guest or the host. The doctor has disappeared, unworthy wretch! and I have only glimpses at rare intervals of my dear girls behind a thick row of trees. And I have strange feelings at times, so strange that I prefer not

to analyse them. If I record this, my life, it is in order that my adventure be not lost for ever. And to them who are to come after me, I leave it as the Bible of times future, when the Cornucopia has been given to the world.

WHAT THE PRESS SAID OF
MR. RAFFALOVICH'S FIRST VOLUME IN
THE ENGLISH TONGUE:

"ON THE LOOSE"

(THE EQUINOX. *1s. net.*)

(*First published under the title of "Planetary Journeys and
Earthly Sketches."*)

Mr. Israel Zangwill wrote to the author:

"Your trips to a Planet betray, if I may say so, a very modern feeling of the plasticity of the universe, together with a sense of the comparative values which to my mind is the highest manifestation of the human reason. The absolute incongruity and inconsequence of your planetary inventions—I mean their asymmetry—gives them a peculiarly plausible character."

The Scotsman says:

"A curious blend of the mystical and fantastic will be found in the essays and sketches which fill this volume. Their writer, however, possesses a certain distinction of style and has the faculty of deftly introducing emotional or pathetic chords, which he strikes with the touch of an artist."

The Occult Review says:

"Whoever reads these thirteen little sketches attentively will find a light and skilled hand, inventive imagination, delicacy and fidelity to truth. The adventures in other planets are the least satisfactory, as the subject demands more elaborate treatment to produce conviction in the manner that Swift achieves, but several of the later stories are admirable. 'A Spring Meeting' gives us in an attractive setting a bird's-eye view of the three principal attitudes held by men towards the universe. 'The Little Girl with the Grey Eyes,' though slight, is moving in its

talent of beauty, cruelty, and pathos; and this passage from 'Faithful Swallows,' the most charming story in the book, will give an idea of the author's style: 'Her name? Does it matter? She was one of those little angels of whom the mere presence witnesses the love of the father for the mother, of the mother for the father, and the passionate affection of both for the little being for whose existence they are responsible.' It is evident throughout that the writer is full of talent."

The Dawn says:

"A little volume, handsomely printed for its price, but a great work. The author of these thirteen little stories need have no fear for his literary future. After some imaginary trips to unreal planets, where he makes us acquainted with some very odd beings, both in their shape and their ways of living, Mr. Raffalovich gives us a few sketches of real life. Some are Russian, with intense local colour and a power of description remarkably evident. Two are French, and 'Monsieur Billard,' especially, is a masterpiece; the others are only human, and belong to all countries. 'Faithful Swallows' may be ranged among the best stories for children and their elders.

"Mr. Raffalovich is a pessimist, evidently. But he is not without his hopes. We could certainly not call him a Socialist, but he shows a too rare instinct of revolt against all evils of Society, not to be welcome as a revolutionary."

The Mask says:

"Mr. Raffalovich in his dedication explains the scope of this collection of sketches when he says: 'I did not intend to prove anything, only to shape a few dreams and help others to realize that the conceptions of the imagination may be realities, and that we must not be too proud of being human creatures.'

"One of the author's fantasies takes the form of a journey to a neighbouring planet in company with two of the inhabitants, who, having wandered to our earth, conduct him with them to visit theirs.

"Among the characteristics which he attributes to these strange beings is their silence. 'Conversation makes us somewhat tired,' explains one of them; 'we have not the habit of talking . . . we will answer with gestures.' 'I endeavoured to explain to them,' goes on the author, 'that with us also speech was tending to become of less importance; that we no longer held it in so high esteem as did the Greeks and Romans. They, even those of the lowest class, would have hissed an orator who lengthened or shortened a syllable out of place.' In this they certainly had the advantage of us, with whom slovenly modes of speech are not only countenanced but encouraged by society.

We do not sufficiently realize to-day the responsibility of transmitting, unspoiled to the next generation, our mother tongue. It was interesting in this connection to note lately in one of the London papers the letter in which a correspondent drew attention to the fact that the 'gergo' of London had changed entirely even since the days of Dickens, and he described the shock of surprise which he experienced on hearing for the first time the change of the *a* to *i* which has come to be the most salient characteristic of Cockney speech.

"'I had to confess all the same,' continues Mr. Raffalovich, 'that the power of speech is still great among us. And what more natural? Is not speech the interpreter of the heart, the paint-brush of the mind, the image through which thought finds expression? Is it not the salt of life, the *raison d'être* of our oldest institutions? If we despised speech, it would be the end of everything.'

"But would it? Is not this a false assumption? There are tribes in America which communicate almost entirely by gestures . . . and are there not means of transmitting thought swifter and more subtle than the utterance of words? Are not words rather a translation than a direct transmission of thought, generally useful, frequently beautiful, but never infallible as vehicles for ideas? Two men say 'heaven,' and they mean things entirely different; two men say 'woman,' and conjure up images as different as day and night. And in our moments of deepest feeling do we not take refuge in silence, feeling, if we do not say, 'I cannot put it into words'? This volume, which also contains some grim sketches of Russian life, is well printed, showing careful and artistic work on the part of the publishers."

The Late Empedocles interviewed by a medium, answered:

"Yes, it is all true, but I never spoke to that person."
(*Apropos* of the story called the "Hardy Annual.")

The Evening Standard says:

"A queer mixture of not unworthy ingredients is counted in this book. The first four stories are records of imaginary adventures on a planet other than our own, and finally the writer comes very decisively back to mundane things with a few narrative sketches of people of the earth—earthly. Mr. Raffalovich has talent, though of a somewhat undisciplined sort."

The Sunday Sun says:

"Mr. George Raffalovich is a young writer bearing a name eminent in diplomacy, but known also to the discriminating among readers of English papers for its association with a peculiar and fanciful type of literary sketch. This volume is a

collection of these articles. Some of them deal with imaginary journeys to imaginary planets, and they reveal a novel capacity for linking up a philosophic view of life with a strangely coloured vision of things, not only as they are, but as they are not. There is something naïve about these sketches; they interest the adult much in the same way as a fairy tale would interest a child. The light that never was on sea or land pervades the stories of the spheres. The earthly sketches, whilst being marked by the same *naïveté*, are just as realistic as the others are ideal. There is power in his descriptions of Russian life, not so much because of his capacity of conveying a verbal picture, as by his capacity for infecting the reader with his own moods. Mr. Raffalovich has produced a book of whimsies, fancies, and realities, which all lovers of literature will welcome."

The Clarion says :

"A collection of curious fantasies and dream stories. . . . The stories are sufficiently good to make one believe that when Mr. Raffalovich has acquired a style of his own, he will do fine work."

The Oxford Magazine says :

"The earthly sketches—typically gruesome Russian stories—are cleverly written on conventional lines, while 'Faithful Swallows' barely misses being a very beautiful story."

The Liverpool Daily Post says :

"In the 'Planetary Journeys' there are some bright flashes of satire, but the conclusion disappoints. The Russian and French sketches, however, make amends, as keen insight is conveyed in clear and concise expression."

Justice says :

"There is ichor in the veins of M. Raffalovich. We will not say how much, but it is there. We regret to have to confess anything, since confession is bad for the soul, but we have thoroughly enjoyed this book. We relished it none the less because we have already soared with him in the pages of our clever contemporary, the 'New Age,' from which some of these sketches have been reprinted. M. Raffalovich is a young man, and, although youth carries its own condemnation, we are confident that he will go further—and fare even better. He has an invigorating manner, and a delicious disdain of conventional ideas. Indeed, his riotous behaviour towards the lares and penates of accepted opinion savours of the revolutionary. We can listen to the blood-and-mud diatribes of the Rev. Bernard Vaughan with equanimity. He is almost interesting, at times. 'Pious Platitudes Poorly Expressed' moved us not at all. But

Father Vaughan and Miss Corelli show a pleasant lack of originality which, when it is not soporific, is certainly soothing. They provide an eminently healthy entertainment for Brixton, and similar intellectual centres—and Brixton goes on existing. Brain-fag is unknown there. M. Raffalovich really must study the taste of Brixton, for suburbia makes and unmakes popular novelists. But perhaps his ambitions are less highly-placed. If he prefers to dwell on the lower slopes with Nietzsche, or to walk in the pleasant valleys with 'Erewhon' Butler; if he does not yearn for the intellectual altitudes inhabited by Mr. Hall Caine and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; if, in short, he is content to give us good work instead of popular fiction, let him continue his Icarian flights. 'Planetary Journeys' is not a masterpiece, but it contains the germs of real talent, and a friend of ours (who, we regret to say, is addicted to excessive Wordsworth) assures us that oaks spring from acorns. We would advise M. Raffalovich to curb his style and give rein to his imagination."

The New Age says :

"Six of the thirteen sketches that form this pleasant little volume have appeared in the 'New Age,' and have served to create a demand for the others. Mr. Raffalovich is distinguished by a quaint fantasy which never forces an obtrusive bit of false realism to play havoc with his extra-mundane creations. It matters so little by what mechanism you are escorted 'across space' on 'A Trip to a Planet'; but the representation of the inhabitants to whom 'good and evil were alike unknown' is well maintained throughout the 'Planetary Journeys.' Coming to the earthly sketches, 'The Mission of Nikita' is a gruesome little tale of a Russian peasant who explains to his wife 'Anissia, my little dove,' that Ossip, the sick and wealthy, must be killed. 'Everyone dies. It is really more agreeable that he should die now.' Anissia protests that 'Ossip Ivanich is perhaps rich, but he shall die when God wishes him to die.' Anissia is felled and finished off on the floor with her husband's boot. The sick man is next disposed of; the dead man's money the peasant hands to the Commissary of Police 'for the secret funds destined for the next pogroms.' Thus, despite his trial for the murder, Nikita 'tells his story and his crime, for ever adding new developments.' 'Faithful Swallows' is a dainty portrayal of the loss we all undergo in this hard-featured world, in our transition from childhood's happy innocent beliefs to our grown-up scepticisms. Mr. Raffalovich shows his intimacy with a short story's essence in 'Monsieur Billard' and 'The Dream of a French Capitalist.' The author is master of a gracious style, never redundant, and always expressive. We shall hope to see him exhibit his powers on a larger scale."

The Publishers' Circular says:

"Mr. Raffalovich is a satirist with a whimsical humour and a faculty for representing ordinary things upside down; his guests and guides from other planets are creatures worth knowing. The 'earthy sketches' are powerful and unusual pieces of work."

What The Occult Review says of

"THE EQUINOX," VOL. I, No. 4

"This Gargantuan volume contains such a variety of matter that it is only possible to give the merest sketch of its contents in a short notice. There is a long continuation of 'The Temple of Solomon the King,' which, like a stately vessel, winged with pearl and amethyst, is borne majestically upon the ocean of its profound philosophy. George Raffalovich has a story of elusive subtlety. In 'Mr. Todd, A Morality,' there is a symbolism curiously blended of the sinister and the pathetic, as well as shrewd insight into human nature. The Editor and his staff of reviewers sport like young goats among the ordered pastures of indifferently and well bound volumes. While some are left standing or held aloft for admiration, others are not only knocked down, but even trampled upon and savagely bitten. The review of 'The White Slave Traffic' is excellent for its bold rebuke of hypocrisy and its healthy outlook upon the whole subject, and Captain Fuller has a long and favourable critique of Albert Churchward's 'The Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man' which should be read by all lovers of light. Indeed, the notices of books in this number are as characteristic as ever, and when they do not illuminate, they make us laugh or smile, which is no bad thing. 'Glaziers' Houses: or, The Shaving of Shagpat,' is designed as a kind of defence of Bernard Shaw. He who wishes to chase the esoteric can do so in two poems by Victor B. Neuburg, who admirably limns the lurching gait and monstrous form of a gnome in the very construction of the lines of his first contribution. Aleister Crowley's poem 'Adela' has that expression of beauty, that signal power and that fierce desire which we can now at once recognize. 'The Violinist' appears to have been written to accompany a series of drawings which Aubrey Beardsley did not live to execute; at least, I am sure that this artist would have hastened to ask to be allowed to illustrate the story. Among the many poems, 'The Felon Flower,' by Ethel Archer, is remarkable for a fine diabolism. But the wonder of the whole book is the noble and beautiful poem, 'The High History of Good Sir Palamedes the Saracen Knight and of his Following of the Questing Beast. By Aleister Crowley rightly set forth in rime.'"

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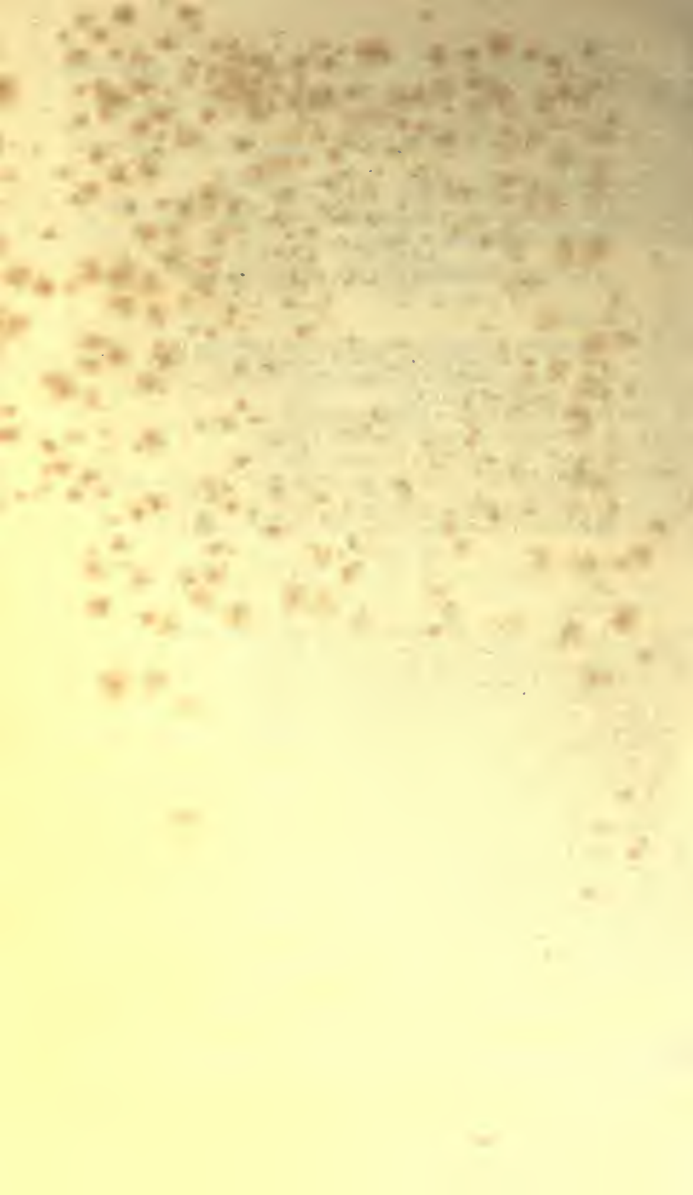
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